

# Living with Cancer

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Cancer, a disease of uncontrolled growth, is sometimes preventable and, with recent advances in treatment, may also be curable. It is estimated that one in two males and one in three females in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer during their lifetime including non-melanoma skin cancer.

Approximately **30,000** new cases of lung, breast, colorectal and prostate cancer will be diagnosed in Arizona this year. Age remains the most common risk factor, but diet and physical activity hold the most promise as modifiable risk factors. In fact, adherence to a healthy diet has been estimated to reduce risk of a cancer diagnosis by approximately **30 percent**. And when people adopt other healthy habits, such as daily physical activity, the risk may be reduced close to **50 percent**.

Put simply, if you wish to reduce your risk for cancer, the American Cancer Society, American Institute for Cancer Research and the National Cancer Institute all recommend:

- *Achieve and maintain a healthy body weight*
- *Eat a plant-based diet enriched with colorful vegetables*
- *Choose foods that are low in fat—lean poultry, fish, low or no fat dairy*
- *Avoid processed and high fat meats*
- *Be physically active every day*
- *Do not smoke*

If you have been diagnosed with cancer, it is important to know that most people survive, particularly when the disease is diagnosed in the early stages. So, if you are a cancer survivor, here are some ideas to keep yourself healthy (note that they are similar to the recommendations at the left).

- *Eat vegetables 4-6 times a day and include variety in color and flavor. You can be assured that you will receive all the cancer preventive nutrients and phytochemicals your body needs.*
- *Be active—not only should you schedule recreational activities for yourself, but you should also make physically active lifestyle choices—park away from your destination, jump rope in the TV room, walk at lunch, pace the floor when you're on the phone, take the stairs, etc.*

Data from studies conducted in breast cancer survivors suggest survival may be increased by as much as about **40 percent** in females who eat more carotenoids. Carotenoids give fruits and vegetables their rich color, for example:

- *Carrots*
- *Peppers*
- *Green leafy vegetables*
- *Broccoli*
- *Tomatoes*
- *Cantaloupe or watermelon*
- *Sweet potatoes*
- *Other dark green, yellow-orange vegetables and fruit*

It is also extremely important for you to reduce calorie intake as a way of maintaining a healthy body weight. Excess body weight not only promotes several cancers (breast, endometrial, ovarian, colorectal, prostate) it may also lead to the onset of diabetes and cardiovascular disease in cancer survivors. Recent evidence suggests that a diagnosis of diabetes is an associated risk factor for several cancers, especially recurrent breast cancer. While studies are limited, other eating behaviors that have suggested improved health for cancer survivors include:

- *Higher intake of vegetables in the crucifer family (broccoli, kale, cabbage, cauliflower, bok choy, kohlrabi, brussels sprouts, wasabi and horseradish)*
- *Low fat food intake (about 20 percent of total daily calories) of nonfat dairy, lean meats, increased amounts of fish and poultry, and avoidance of fried foods or added fats, such as butter/margarine, gravy and salad dressings)*
- *Increased intake of berry, cherry, green tea, onion, garlic, tomato products and citrus, as these foods are rich in cancer-preventive compounds*
- *Reduced intake of sweetened beverages, and increased intake of vegetable juice and/or green, white or black tea*
- *Alcohol consumption in low to moderate amounts, if at all*

Cancer is a survivable disease for most people facing this diagnosis. A cancer diagnosis can be challenging and difficult to face on many levels. Some patients undergoing treatment find diet and activity to be aspects of treatment they can actively participate in, potentially establishing healthier lifestyles for years to come.