

Diet. Cancer

The international landmark report on cancer prevention from WCRF (World Cancer Research Fund) /AICR, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of Cancer: a Global Perspective*, found that about a third of all cancers are directly linked to the foods we eat, the exercise we get and how well we manage our weight.

The harmful ones include:

Alcohol - can cause of cancer of the mouth, pharynx and larynx, cancer of the oesophagus, and breast cancer. For colorectal cancer, the evidence is convincing for men and probable for women. Recommendation is that if people choose to drink, they should limit themselves to one drink a day for a woman and two drinks a day for a man.

Processed meat - is one of the causes of bowel cancer. Processed meat refers to any meat that is preserved by salting, curing, smoking, or adding chemical preservatives. This means meat such as ham, bacon and hot dogs and some sausages.

Red meat - red meat, such as beef, lamb and pork, is a cause of bowel cancer. Recommendation is considering eating no more than 500g red meat per week.

Salt and salty food - possible cause of stomach cancer. Recommends avoidance of salty foods and have less than 6g of salt/day.

Smoking - the major cause of lung cancer (increases risk by 10-20 times). Also causes leukaemia, oral, nasal cavity, nasopharyngeal, oesophageal, liver, stomach, cervical, kidney, bowel and bladder cancers. Early smoking cessation can reduce risk to near normal.

Body fatness -fat deposited around the waist is linked with bowel cancer, and can also cause postmenopausal breast cancer, pancreatic cancer, gall bladder and endometrial cancer.

The healthy ones include:

Breastfeeding - Breastfeeding (exclusively for the first 6 months), protects the mother against breast cancer, and it also probably protects the child against obesity later in life, which is in turn linked to a higher cancer risk.

Garlic -probably protects against bowel cancer.

Fruit - eating a wide range of fruit probably protects against cancers of the mouth, pharynx and larynx, oesophagus, lung, and stomach. Recommends at least five portions of a wide variety of fruits and vegetables every day.

Lycopene -lycopene, which is found in tomatoes and other red fruits, probably protects against prostate cancer.

If by simple adjustment of our diet and maintaining the changes long term could decrease the risk of cancer, then why not be a bit more careful, starting with the next meal?