

Oncology News



....*More than medicine*

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Nutrition and Cancer Prevention – From Its All Greek to Meat

By Diana M. Seaders, PA-C

It has been estimated that 1/3 of all cancer-related deaths are linked to diet and physical activity. There are a plethora of research studies that have investigated the relationship between the foods we eat and our risk of various cancers. Interestingly, the jury is still out specifically with fruits and vegetables in connection with our risk of cancer prevention, but has identified that high intake of red meat and processed meats increase risk of colorectal cancer. Overall, what we are seeing is that the big picture may matter more than individual dietary components.

Olive Longer: European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) study

The European Prospective Inves-

tigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) study was a prospective analysis conducted from 1992-2000, investigating the relationship between fruits and vegetables and cancer risk. The diets and lifestyles of over 470,000 men and women

were followed during this time. Only a very modest reduction of risk was observed between the intake of fruits and vegetables and cancer risk. However, a subset of the EPIC study looking specifically at Greek residents found that strong adherence to the “Mediterranean diet” was associated with a 12% overall less risk of all cancers. The Mediterranean diet was classified as:



to saturated lipid ratio

2. High consumption of fruits
3. High consumption of vegetables
4. High consumption of legumes
5. High consumption of cereals
6. Low consumption of meats and meat products
7. Low to moderate consumption of milk and dairy products
8. Moderate consumption of ethanol, mostly in the form of wine at meals

1. High monounsaturated

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Beef: Maybe It's Not What's For Dinner

The EPIC study also found that high intake of red meat and processed meats is shown to significantly increase the risk of colon cancer. In this study, red meat included beef, veal, pork, and lamb. Processed meats were mostly beef and pork that were preserved via salting, smoking, marinating or heating (ham, bacon, sausage, luncheon meat, etc.). The reason for the increased risk of colorectal cancer is still unknown, but it is theorized that heme iron vs inorganic iron may be implicated. Cooking meat at high temperatures, via frying or grilling, causes the formation of heterocyclic amines (HCAs) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH), which may pose a potential risk of cancer in humans. In this study, poultry was found to be a safe choice and fish may actually have a protective effect against colorectal cancer.

Chews Wisely

Overall recommendations:

Choose fish/ poultry/ legumes over red meat and processed meats. If you are going to indulge in red meat, select a lean cut and keep meat portion size small so cooking time is less. Consider pre-cooking meat with baking and finishing on the grill.

Opt for whole grains/ high fiber items vs refined/ processed grains.

Strive for daily variety with fruits and vegetables. American Cancer Society recommends 2.5 cups per day.

Avoid/ minimize sugary foods, saturated fat, fast foods, sodas that will drive up blood sugar levels and cause excess weight gain. Choose healthier options with monounsaturated fat such as nuts, avocado, olive oil.

Alcoholic beverages: Either abstain or keep to a minimum (no more than 2 drinks/ day for men and 1/ day for women). Even moderate alcohol intake is linked with some cancers.

Don't bite off more than you can chew! Pay attention to portion sizes.

References:

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