

Nutrition After Cancer Treatment: Long-Term Health

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When you've completed cancer treatment and are on the road to recovery, you'll benefit from taking a look down that road for the best way to eat well and stay healthy.

Plant-Food Power Punch

Plant food nourishes your body in ways other foods cannot. By plant food, we mean vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans (legumes). Based on the latest research, there is no doubt that eating a lot of plant food, which provides minerals, vitamins, fiber and phytochemicals, can reduce the risk of many types of cancer. Even after a diagnosis, a diet focused on plant foods is one of the most important ways to stay healthy for the long term! We're not just talking about the "5-A-Day" fruit and vegetable promotion you've heard of. Instead, we're talking about focusing your whole eating plan around vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes with less focus on red meats and animal fats. This may reduce our risk of recurring cancer, new cancer and prevent many other diseases.

Recreate Your Plate

Starting at the beginning means focusing on your plate. The American Institute for Cancer Research wants you to know it as "New American Plate." This is a simple method for deciding how much and what to put on your dinner plate. Traditionally, Americans focus on the meat part of the meal, which may comprise half of the plate. Next, you may find a large serving of refined starch like rice with gravy or butter. There may be a small portion of vegetables and a couple of white rolls or biscuits. Let's not forget cake or cream pie for dessert. This plate focuses on fat, refined grains and only a few vegetables. Let's take a new look and build it a different way. About three-fourths of a healthy plate will be covered by minimally processed plant

food. This means a lot of colorful vegetables, perhaps beans, whole grains such as brown rice, whole wheat bread, whole-wheat pasta. The remaining one-quarter of the plate can be filled with three ounces of lean protein like fish or chicken. Having fruit for dessert adds more plant to the plate!

Balancing Act

In addition to the healthy nutrients provided by this eating plan, you'll also get better weight management. Keeping your body weight in a healthy range is another important way to stay healthy after cancer. Balancing how many calories you eat with how many calories you use (by your activities) is necessary to maintain a healthy weight. Using the New American Plate method you will be eating fruits and vegetables, which are lower in calories and eating more fiber. Fiber can help you feel satisfied and less tempted to eat higher calorie foods.

Adding it All Up

A healthy, plant-based diet combined with regular exercise, a healthy body weight, alcohol use only in moderation or not at all, and avoiding tobacco use will help you get your body on the way to wellness after cancer.

To learn more about healthy living after cancer treatment consider registering for the "Healthy Living with Cancer" program offered by the Marion L Shepherd Cancer Center.

Call the cancer center at 252-975-4308 for more information on this program and others.