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## **Q:** What are the best cancer-fighting foods I can eat?

**A:** There are four big lifestyle components that can increase your risk of getting cancer: regular tobacco use, carrying excess fat mass, low physical activity levels and poor diet quality. Focusing on improving these four factors can greatly lower your chances of developing cancer.

Diet is often an area where there's much misinformation surrounding what's necessary for cancer prevention. Countless social media posts have promoted food X, Y or Z for its "cancer-fighting properties," but what does the available scientific evidence say on the matter?

For starters, there's no one food, vitamin, mineral or dietary supplement that's been proven to prevent any type of cancer. There are, however, foods or food groups that have been associated with increased or decreased risk of certain types of cancer; one popular example is the association between processed red meats and increased rates of colon cancer. But we can't say for sure that these red meats will cause cancer — we've merely identified a possible link. At best, our current scientific knowledge on the matter can help us advise people about which foods to consume more of and which to limit.

It essentially boils down to a balancing act. Consuming more fruits and vegetables may decrease cancer risk, but that doesn't mean your entire diet should consist of only these two food groups. Frequent processed red-meat consumption may moderately increase the risk of colon cancer, but that doesn't mean you can't reasonably incorporate some into your diet (just maybe don't eat it every day). Of the foods that have consistently shown to either not increase risk or slightly decrease risk, the list is succinct: fruits, vegetables, whole grains and fiber. Focusing on incorporating more of these into your diet can have health benefits outside of any cancer-fighting properties they may or may not possess.

It's important to realize that there is no 100 percent effective method for ensuring you will never get cancer. But the aforementioned lifestyle modifications decrease your odds of developing it. Regularly following a healthy diet pattern is just one part of the cancer-prevention equation.

— Kamal Patel, MPH, Director, Examine.com