

Plant-Based Diet

Eating a diet that has a lot of plant-based foods—such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, whole grains, herbs, and spices—may help protect your body and keep you healthy during and after cancer treatments. Research shows that the fiber, vitamins, minerals, and other phytonutrients found in plant-based foods can help prevent disease.

What Is a Plant-Based Diet?

Evidence shows a diet made up mostly of minimally processed plants can lower the risk for cancer, in addition to other chronic diseases. Getting the health benefits of plant-based diet eating does *not* require you to completely remove all animal proteins (eggs, poultry, fish, and dairy) from your diet. Instead, you should make plants the *majority* of each meal.

How Can I Add More Plant Foods to My Diet?

At every meal, fill *at least* $\frac{1}{2}$ your plate with vegetables or fruit. Aim for 2 cups of fruit and $2\frac{1}{2}$ cups of vegetables as your daily goal. Choose mostly whole grains instead of more refined breads and cereals. To meet your goals, try the following:

- Start the day off right. Add fruit to your cereal or chopped veggies to your eggs.
- Feature beans or vegetables as your main dish.
- Plan meals without meat. Try alternative protein sources like beans, tofu, tempeh, seitan, or textured vegetable protein.
- Snack on fruits, vegetables, and nuts. Keep ready-to-eat favorites handy to choose throughout the day.
- Choose both raw and cooked fruits and vegetables, as some phytonutrients in plants are improved through the process of cooking.
- Add extra veggies to soups, stews, salads, and casseroles.
- Keep frozen vegetables on hand for a quick side dish or to add to a stir-fry.
- Choose whole grains like brown rice, 100% whole wheat bread, barley, bulgur, and oatmeal. Whole grains have more fiber, protein, and nutrients. Look for new recipes for grains you haven't tried before.
- Use a variety of spices and herbs to add flavor to meals and snacks.
- Make fruit your dessert.



Phytonutrients

Phytonutrients give plant foods their flavor, color, fiber, and texture. The crunch of an apple, the tart taste of a cranberry, the warm smell of cinnamon, and the bright color of a pumpkin all come from phytonutrients. There are thousands of different phytonutrients in plants, many of which have not yet been identified or studied in depth. Examples of phytonutrients include carotenoids, lycopene, isoflavones, and anthocyanins.

Phytonutrients may help prevent cancer through a variety of mechanisms, including preventing damage to your cells' DNA. Different colors of plant-based foods provide different combinations of phytonutrients. Experts recommended that you a diet that includes a wide variety of colorful plant foods to get the benefits from as many different phytonutrients as possible. The list below shows some choices.

Plant Foods That Supply Phytonutrients

Color	Plant foods
Red	Tomatoes, kidney beans, strawberries, raspberries, watermelon, pink grapefruit, cranberries, red apples, red grapes
Orange	Carrots, sweet potatoes, winter squash, cantaloupe, peaches, mangoes, oranges, pumpkin
Yellow	Yellow squash, corn, pineapple, lemons, turmeric
Light green	Lettuce, celery, zucchini, cucumbers, asparagus, artichokes, limes, green grapes, green apples, kiwi
Dark green	Cabbage, broccoli, spinach, brussels sprouts, kale, beet greens, turnip greens, collard greens, many herbs (like oregano and basil)
Blue and purple	Beets, eggplant, purple grapes, blueberries
White	Onions, garlic, mushrooms, cauliflower, potatoes
Brown	Cinnamon, nuts, brown rice, whole wheat, other whole grains, flax seed, coffee, tea



Sample Plant-Based Menu

Breakfast	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ¾ cup oatmeal ¼ cup blueberries 2 tablespoon pecans 6 ounces yogurt
Lunch	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 pita stuffed with ¼ cup hummus, 1 cup mixed chopped lettuce, shredded carrot, sliced cucumber, and bell pepper 1 orange
Snack	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 tablespoon peanut butter 1 small apple
Dinner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 ounces baked fish 1 cup steamed broccoli 1 tablespoon Parmesan cheese ½ cup brown rice 1 cup chopped vegetable salad 1 medium baked peach ½ cup frozen yogurt

Resources

American Institute for Cancer Research, resources for plant-based recipes and information:
www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/recipes

