

LIFESCRIPT



10 Foods That Help Fight Cancer

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Food does more than sustain us – it can also keep our bodies healthy. Some foods even have cancer-fighting properties. Read on for 10 items that can ward off the big “C” and how to add them to your diet. Plus, test your cancer IQ with our quiz...

Most of us know the foods that pack on pounds: burgers, ice cream, chips and more. But what you eat goes beyond whether you’ll fit into your jeans. Healthy foods also may keep cancer at bay.

“Though there’s no one food that will reduce your risk of this disease, it’s the synergy between many nutrients – vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, antioxidants – that’s likely to give you the most protection,” says Colleen Doyle, M.S., R.D., director of nutrition and physical activity for the American Cancer Society.

These 10 edibles pack a powerful anti-cancer punch:

1. Berries

How they help: Berries contain antioxidants – compounds believed to protect your cells from damage that’s been linked to cancer – and may boost your immune system, says **Lisa Young, Ph.D., R.D., author of *The Portion Teller (Broadway)* and adjunct professor of nutrition at New York University.**

They contain polyphenols, including ellagic acid and anthocyanins – antioxidants that counteract, reduce and repair damage to cells, Doyle says. Berries are also brimming with other potential cancer-fighters like vitamin C and fiber.

Cancers they may fight: Skin, bladder, lung, breast, cancer and esophageal

Get your fill: Toss blueberries, blackberries, raspberries and strawberries into yogurt, smoothies, cereal and salads or stir them into muffin or pancake recipes.

2. Grapes

How they help: A plant chemical called resveratrol, an antioxidant and anti-inflammatory, hides in the skin of grapes – especially purple and red ones. Studies have

shown they may keep cancer cells from growing and inhibit tumors, according to the American Institute for Cancer Research.

Cancers they may fight: Liver, stomach, breast and colon

Get your fill: Wash grapes, freeze them, then eat them as a sweet snack or add sliced ones into salads or cottage cheese. (Red wine contains this compound, but it's not the best way to consume resveratrol because alcohol has been linked to higher cancer risk.)

3. Tomatoes

How they help: Tomatoes get their bright red color from an antioxidant called lycopene, which can protect cells from damage and kill those that aren't growing properly, Doyle says.

They also may protect skin from cancer "by absorbing UV light," says Wilhelm Stahl, Ph.D., professor and antioxidant researcher at the University of Dusseldorf in Germany.

Cancers they may fight: Breast, lung, endometrial, skin, prostate and mouth

Get your fill: Cooked or processed tomato-based foods – juice, sauce, paste, soup, even ketchup – have the most lycopene because heat releases more of this nutrient and allows your body to absorb it more easily.

Not a tomato lover? You can get lycopene in pink grapefruit and watermelon, too.

4. Cruciferous veggies

How they help: Cruciferous veggies (think broccoli, kale and cabbage) contain potential cancer fighters such as glucosinolates, crambene and indole-3-carbinol, says the American Institute for Cancer Research. They also contain sulforaphane, which may keep cancer at bay by helping rid the body of carcinogens and inhibit the growth of cancer cells, according to research from the Roswell Park Cancer Institute in Buffalo, N.Y.

Cancers they may fight: Stomach, breast, skin, mouth, pharynx, larynx and esophageal

Get your fill: Try broccoli, cauliflower, bok choy, kale, Brussels sprouts and cabbage salad. Eat veggies raw or lightly steamed because they lose powerful phytochemicals when overcooked.

5. Garlic

How it helps: Garlic contains unique antioxidant phytochemicals called allyl sulfides that "seem to intervene in several steps of the cancer process," says Karen Collins, R.D., C.D.N., nutrition advisor to the American Institute for Cancer Research. A 2007 study in the *Journal of Nutrition* suggests that these compounds inhibit colon tumor formation and cell growth.

Cancers it may fight: Stomach, esophageal, breast, lung and colon

Get your fill: Sauté veggies in a clove or two of garlic or add it to homemade salad dressings, dips, pasta sauces and soups. Also, add garlic salt or powder to ground beef while making burgers or sprinkle it on pizza.

6. Tea

How it helps: Tea is chock full of antioxidants called catechins, which lab studies have found may stop growth of cancer cells and reduce the size of cancerous tumors.

Cancers it may fight: Colon, liver, breast, prostate, lung, skin, bladder, stomach and pancreatic

Get your fill: Sip hot or cold green tea instead of coffee (it has less caffeine and no calories if you go sugarless). Black tea offers benefits, but green tea has three times more catechins, according to the American Institute of Cancer Research.

7. Flaxseed

How it helps: “Flaxseed contains an antioxidant called lignans, which may help the body rid itself of carcinogens, and omega-3 fatty acids, which are believed to reduce inflammation and boost the body’s immune system,” says Krista Haynes, R.D., a staff dietitian with the Cancer Project, a nonprofit group in Washington, D.C.

Cancers it may fight: Colon, breast, skin and lung

Get your fill: Try cooking or baking with flaxseed meal, flour and oil (all found at health food stores) or sprinkle ground flaxseed on cereal, oatmeal or salads.

8. Legumes

How they help: They may be tiny, but legumes such as peas, beans and lentils pack a big nutritional punch.

“They contain natural phytochemicals that are uniquely different from those in vegetables and whole grains,” Collins says.

These include saponins, protease inhibitors and phytyca acid, which lab studies reveal may prevent the reproduction of cancer cells, as well as fiber, which can decrease your risk of colon cancer, according to a 2007 American Institute of Cancer Research report.

Cancers they may fight: Colon and stomach, among others

Get your fill: Top salads with lentils and peas, whip up lentil or pea soup, add pea pods to your stir-fry or nosh on plain old peanuts.

9. Whole grains

How they help: People who get their fill of whole grains have a 21% to 43% lower risk of cancer than those who eat little to none, according to a study from the School of Public

Health at the University of Minnesota. Unlike refined grains, whole grains have the bran and germ layers, which are packed with antioxidants and other nutrients.

“They also contain fiber, which, when fermented in the colon, may produce substances that protect cells from cancer-causing agents,” Collins says.

Cancers they may fight: Breast, colon and stomach

Get your fill: Bake with whole-wheat flour and have oatmeal for breakfast. Eat sandwiches made with whole-wheat bread (“whole wheat” should be the first word on the ingredient list) and replace white rice with wild or brown.

10. Dark-green leafy vegetables

How they help: These emerald-hued veggies contain folate and carotenoids.

“Carotenoids are antioxidants that aid cell-to-cell communication that controls cell growth, while folate is essential to protect our DNA, the starting point of any change that leads to cancer,” Collins says.

Cancers they may fight: Breast, skin, lung, stomach, mouth, pharynx and larynx

Get your fill: Add spinach to omelets and swap it for iceberg lettuce in salads (throw in romaine lettuce, leaf lettuce and Swiss chard, too). For dinner, lightly sauté mustard greens, collard greens and kale in olive oil and a squirt of lemon.

What’s Your Cancer IQ?

Cell phones, makeup, bug spray, even fresh produce all have been rumored to cause cancer. But should you believe every cancer myth you hear? How much do you know about everyday cancer risks? Test your cancer knowledge with [this quiz](#).

Join the behind-the-scenes conversation on [Health Bistro](#), LifeScript’s blog.