

Let's eat and drink healthily

Did you know that what we eat and drink can affect our cancer risk?

Eating a balanced diet can help you keep a healthy weight and reduce your risk of some of the most common cancers, like breast and bowel cancer. In this leaflet, we'll help you get started with eating and drinking healthily. **So, let's get going!**

Seven ways to cut your cancer risk

01. Think about what's on your plate

Get the right balance of food on your plate. But what does a healthy plate of food look like?

At mealtimes try to:

- **Fill half of your plate with colourful vegetables or salad.** Vegetables like potatoes and yams should be eaten in smaller amounts.
- **Fill a quarter of your plate with foods high in fibre**, such as wholegrains like brown rice, whole wheat pasta or wholemeal bread.
- **Fill a quarter with a healthy protein** like fresh fish, fresh chicken or pulses like beans and lentils.

Now think about your favourite meal. How can you make it healthier next time you cook it?

02. Eat more of these

You can be healthier by making sure these foods are a regular part of your diet.

- **Foods high in fibre**: try lentils, beans, oats, and wholegrains like brown rice, which can reduce the risk of bowel cancer by helping poo pass through the body.
- **Fruit and veg**: fruit and vegetables are low in calories, high in fibre and are full of vitamins and minerals. Making them a big part of your diet can help you keep a healthy weight, which lowers your your risk of cancer.

03. Eat less of these

To eat more healthily, cut down on these foods:

- **High-calorie foods**: things like fried food, puddings and sugary snacks can make you put on weight, and being overweight or obese can increase your risk of cancer.
- **Processed and red meat**: processed meat like ham, bacon and salami, and red meat (pork, beef, lamb) contain chemicals that can increase the risk of cancer.

In a balanced diet you can still eat these foods, just not every day.

Small changes add up to make a big difference.

04. Take it one step at a time

- **Meat-free Mondays:** choose one, or even two, days each week where you don't eat meat.
- **Snack smarter:** swap snacks like crisps and biscuits for fruit or plain nuts, both at home and when you're out.
- **Switch to healthier proteins:** try swapping processed and red meat for chicken, fish, or beans.
- **Aim for 5 a day:** fruit, veg and pulses don't need to be fresh – frozen and tinned count towards your 5 a day too.

05. Cut down on alcohol

Having a healthy diet likely makes you think about food, but what you drink is important too.

Drinking any type of alcohol increases the risk of cancer. This is because our body breaks it down into a toxic chemical that damages our cells.

Stick to the UK Government guidelines of no more than 14 units a week. The less alcohol you drink, the lower your risk of cancer.

1 unit: small single (25ml) measure of spirits (40%)

Just under 1.5 units: 275ml bottle of alcopop (5%)

Around 2 units: 175 ml glass of wine (12.5%); pint of lager, cider or bitter (4%)

Around 3 units: large 250 ml glass of wine (12.5%); pint of higher strength lager, cider or bitter (5.5%)

Just under 3 units: large double (2 x 35 ml) measure of spirits (40%)

9.5 units: 1 bottle of wine (12.5%)

06. Tips to drink less

What you drink is important, too.

There are plenty of ways to drink less alcohol. Why not give these a go?

- **Less is better:** choose a smaller glass and alternate with non-alcoholic drinks.
- **Take days off drinking:** choose some alcohol-free days each week and stick to them.

- **Buddy up:** agree to cut down with a friend or family member to help each other.
- **Don't stock up:** don't stock up on alcohol at home. Only buy alcohol when you plan to drink it.
- **Track it:** making a note of your drinks can help you know how much you're drinking.

07. Watch out for sugar in drinks

Drinks can be higher in calories than you might expect, especially fizzy drinks, energy drinks and flavoured coffees.

Fruit juices and smoothies are also high in sugar, so try not to have more than one small glass a day.

Make water your first choice. Try adding fresh lemon to it.

Around 4 in 10 cases of cancer in the UK could be prevented

That's why we're supporting people to reduce their cancer risk.

Our leaflets guide you through the changes you can make and are based on quality research carried out over many years.

How to find out more:

Visit our website

If you're thinking about making changes to improve your health and reduce your cancer risk, get information and tips at www.cruk.org/health

Give us a call

Speak to a nurse for advice or support on our free Nurse Helpline. Just call **0808 800 4040**

If you have any questions about Cancer Research UK or would like to support our work, call **0300 123 1022**

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