

Cancer Answers

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Food for healthy living

Our youngest son is currently dealing with some tough health issues. Part of the treatment regimen that he is on is very strict dietary guidelines. Hence, food as it relates to healthy living is very much on my mind. With all the scientifically based theories on what foods should be eaten, when and how often, in what form and from what source - planning healthy meals can become overwhelming.

I do not pretend, for one moment, to have the corner on what is best for each of you to eat - first, because I am not a nutritionist and second, because each of you are so unique. However, I do have life experience in dealing with family members, including myself, whose dietary needs require looking at some basic principles for healthy food and healthy living. Although much of this will be review for many of you, I still feel it is valid and important information to share.

1. Eat food that is in a form closest to its original form, as possible. By this I mean: eat vegetables and fruits raw versus cooked whenever possible. (The only exception to the rule are tomatoes. The lycopene content is actually greater in cooked tomatoes than raw.) Meats must be cooked - so choose a simple cooking method like baking or roasting versus frying. Eat baked potatoes with butter and Mrs Dash's extra spicy seasoning instead of french fries ...I think you get the idea.

2. Choose organic vegetables, fruits, breads and dairy products whenever possible. I understand that some of you simply cannot afford organic. If, however you are someone who can afford them and they are available, make the switch to organic. It is hard for anyone's body to deal with the pesticides and additives. It is even more difficult during times when your health is compromised.

3. Purchase hormone-free/antibiotic free dairy and meat products as much as possible. This is especially important if your cancer is a hormone-related cancer. Soy and soy-based products should also be limited or completely eliminated if your cancer is hormone-related.

4. Check the ingredient lists carefully on pre-packaged food. Often they have preservatives and flavor enhancers. (Monosodium glutamate is a flavor enhancer and can be identified by many names. They are MSG, monopotassium glutamate, glutamate, glutamic acid, gelatin, calcium caseinate, hydrolyzed vegetable protein, textured protein, autolyzed plant protein, hydrolyzed plant protein, yeast extract, glutamate, yeast food or nutrient, sodium caseinate and autolyzed yeast. This single additive has been responsible for more health problems than any other. Take my advice and simply stay away from it!) Additionally, many pre-packaged foods have high levels of sugar or salt. Watch for natural or organic pre-packaged foods to go on sale and stock up.

Follow these principles to help you create healthy, flavorFULL meals.

Summer Tips for Comfort and Health

Picnics, hiking, boating, playing golf, swimming and beach volleyball are some of the ways to have fun in the sun. However, the heat combined with radiation or chemotherapy may keep you from having much fun. Below are some tips to help you stay comfortable and healthy so you can enjoy the season.

The most important thing during hot summer days is keeping yourself properly hydrated. If water does not taste good to you - add a couple of fresh cucumber slices or an ounce of cranberry juice to your water bottle. The cucumbers have a cool, refreshing taste and the cranberry is excellent for your bladder and kidneys in addition to tasting great. Make certain you carry a stainless steel water bottle with you everywhere you go. Divide your body weight by two and that is the minimum number of ounces you need daily.

Choose to wear white, lightweight clothing in natural fibers. These will help keep you cool because the white will reflect the sun away and the natural fibers (cotton, linen, hemp, ramie and silk) breathe.

Stylish hats with wide brims look great while protecting your head and face from the sun. If you are sans hair - try a soft cotton scarf underneath your hat OR there are several lines of hats that have cotton liners. A couple are Parkhurst Hats, Hats With Heart and Savvy Sheitels.

Finally, keep food preparation simple and take advantage of the wide variety of fresh produce available in the summertime. Prepare main dish salads a few times a week. They are nutritious AND your kitchen will stay cool. Add some fresh bread and ENJOY!