

# Plant-Based Diet

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Eating a diet rich in plant-based foods—such as vegetables, fruits, nuts, legumes, whole grains, herbs, and spices—may help protect your body and keep you healthy during and after cancer treatments. The vitamins, minerals, fiber, and other phytochemicals in plant-based foods may help with disease prevention.

## What Are Phytochemicals?

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Phytochemicals are substances that give plant foods their flavor, color, fiber, and texture. The crunch of an apple, the tart taste of a cranberry, the warm aroma of cinnamon, and the bright color of a pumpkin all come from phytochemicals.

Phytochemicals may also help prevent cancer and damage to your cells' DNA. Different colors of plant-based foods tend to provide different phytochemicals. Therefore, it makes good sense to eat a balanced diet rich in a variety of colorful plant foods. Review the chart on the next page for some choices to consider.

## Plant Foods Rich in Phytochemicals

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
Yellow	Yellow summer squash, corn, pineapple, lemons, turmeric, olive oil
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
Blue and purple	Beets, purple eggplant, purple grapes, blueberries
White	Onions, garlic, mushrooms, cauliflower, potatoes
Brown	Cinnamon, nuts, brown rice, whole wheat, other whole grains, flax seed, chocolate, coffee, tea

## How Can I Add More Plant Foods to My Diet?

- Aim to meet the goals for fruits and vegetables provided in MyPlate ([www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)). Depending on their age, activity level, and gender, adults should eat 1½ to 2 cups of fruits and 2 to 3 cups of vegetables every day. To meet your goals:
  - Fill at least half of your plate at every meal with raw or cooked vegetables and fruits. For example, feature beans or vegetables as your main dish. Have fresh fruit with your whole grain breakfast cereal or as dessert.

- Snack on fruits, vegetables, and their juices, too.
- Each week, aim to eat some fruits and vegetables of every color.
- Make at least half your grains whole.
- Use a variety of spices and herbs to add flavor to meals and snacks.
- Choose plant oils, like olive oil, instead of animal fats, like butter or lard.
- Substitute plant proteins for meat, and plan meatless meals.

## Plant-Based Diets and Weight Management

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Most fruits and vegetables are low in protein, fat, and calories. If you are having trouble maintaining your weight during cancer treatment, talk with your oncology dietitian about how to get the nutrients you need.

## Additional Resources

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- To find recipes for plant-based meals and snacks, go to the **American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) Test Kitchen Web site:** [www.aicr.org/reduce-your-cancer-risk/diet/reduce\\_diet\\_recipes\\_test\\_kitchen.html](http://www.aicr.org/reduce-your-cancer-risk/diet/reduce_diet_recipes_test_kitchen.html)
- For more information about a well-balanced diet and tools to set goals and track your individual eating plan, visit **MyPlate:** [www.ChooseMyPlate.gov](http://www.ChooseMyPlate.gov)