

Healthy Eating with Prostate Cancer

By: **Marike Bauermeister** (*Registered Dietitian*)

There is no special diet for prostate cancer, rather a few special points to take into consideration. You need to eat a healthy diet, without avoiding any foods unnecessarily.

However, try to avoid preservatives or burnt food or any artificial foods.

There is some evidence that certain foods may slow down the growth of prostate cancer or reduce the risk of it returning after treatment. The research at the moment is limited and we are unsure how different foods affect the growth of prostate cancer.

However, by eating healthily you can take control over your own health and actively do something to improve it. It will also benefit your overall health and reduce your risk of other medical problems such as heart disease and diabetes. So it will never be a waste of your time to follow a healthy diet.

So, let's first talk about some foods which might slow down growth of prostate cancer or reduce the risk of the cancer returning:

- Tomatoes



They contain a chemical called lycopene, which may slow down the growth of prostate cancer. Lycopene is also found in watermelons, guava and papaya.

Processed and cooked tomatoes, for example tomato sauces, soups and pastes, appear to be a better source of lycopene than fresh tomatoes.

- Pomegranate juice



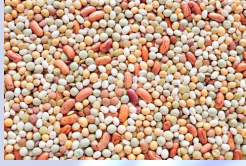
There is some evidence that a glass of pomegranate juice may reduce tumor growth

- Cruciferous vegetables (the cabbage family).



Some studies suggest that cruciferous vegetables may slow down the growth of prostate cancer

- Soy, beans and pulses.



Some studies have suggested that soy may slow down the growth of prostate cancer.

- Add beans, chickpeas and lentils to soups, salads, stews and casseroles
- Have lentils in rice, baked beans on toast, three-bean salad
- Try and include some soya milk, yoghurt and other soya products often but normal cow's milk and dairy products are also good

- Green tea.



There is some evidence that green tea may protect against prostate cancer growing. For green tea to have an effect, you need to drink around six cups a day. This may sound like a lot so if you want to include green tea in your diet, you may find it easier to drink it in place of your usual hot drinks throughout the day. If you are trying to reduce the amount of caffeine you drink, look for decaffeinated green tea

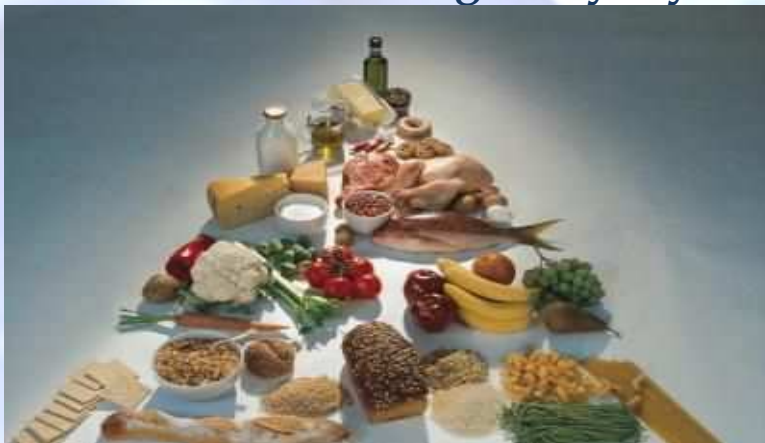
What does healthy eating mean:

Healthy weight:

Being overweight (obese) may be linked to an increased risk of prostate cancer. However, we do not yet fully understand how weight affects prostate cancer growth. Keeping to a healthy weight can also reduce your risk of other health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.

Being underweight can also affect your health, so it is important that you eat enough. Underweight men who are on hormone therapy have a higher risk of bone thinning.

Include the following everyday:



- Fruit and vegetables
- Starchy foods e.g. potatoes, sweet potato, butternut, pumpkin, bread, rice, cereals (fortified with vitamins and minerals)
- Milk and dairy products
- Meat, chicken, fish and eggs
- limiting fats and sugars

Fruit and vegetables

- Current recommendations in cancer advice to aim for 10 portions per day
- If you struggle to reach 5 - 10 portions per day include fresh vegetables and fruit juices but try to make them yourselves since Liquifruit etc. contains small amounts of fibre and vitamins and minerals and lots of sugar
- Use different colours e.g. a colourful salad; add fruit to salad e.g. strawberries or pineapple
- Avoid overcooking vegetables as most of the nutrients end up in the cooking water.
- Don't cut vegetables and leave exposed to air or water, as this will decrease the available nutrients.

Starches and carbohydrates

- Provides energy and keeps blood sugar levels controlled. Low energy levels can be one of the side effects of some treatments

Meat, chicken, fish and eggs

- Builds our bodies
- In serious illness our protein requirements are higher than when we were healthy. This does not mean we should overeat on protein but it does mean we should try to eat protein every day

Milk and dairy

- Great source of calcium and one of the side effects of hormone therapy can be bone thinning
- Some people are afraid of eating dairy since some studies have shown increased risk for cancer in high calcium diets, but this was only with very high calcium intake and there is no evidence showing that a normal dairy intake of two portions per day will increase tumour growth and there is a lot of studies showing that if you are going to avoid dairy unnecessarily you might develop bone diseases later in life.
- Opt for hormone free dairy products such as Woolworths, Clover and Parmalat

Limit total fat intake

- Have more monounsaturated fats i.e. Olive oil, canola oil, avocado, nuts, peanuts and olives
- Have Omega 3 fatty acids fish i.e. salmon, herring, mackerel, sardines, fresh tuna, and pilchards 2 - 3 times a week. They are anti-inflammatory and improves immune function
- Limit saturated fats. These are known as 'bad fats' and are mainly found from animal sources e.g. butter, cream, hard margarine, coconut and palm oil, meat fat
- Avoid processed foods which are high in fat e.g. crisps, biscuits, chocolates

Alcohol

- If you drink alcohol do so in moderation. If you have urinary problems after treatment for prostate cancer, try to cut down on alcohol as it can irritate the bladder and make the problems worse
- Alcohol can make you put on weight

Exercise

- Exercise can help for general sense of wellbeing, maintaining a healthy weight and controlling certain side effects from medications
- Try to exercise at a moderate intensity
- Only exercise if your doctor said you are able to. e.g. after surgery he might suggest that you do not exercise for a few weeks

Supplements

- You should be able to get all the nutrients you need by eating a balanced diet rather than taking supplements.
- High doses of some supplements may be harmful. Supplements may also interfere with some treatments for prostate cancer, so let your specialist know if you are taking, or plan to take, any supplements.
- It is recommended to take a general multivitamin and mineral
- Your doctor may recommend specific supplements in particular cases. For example they may advise you to take calcium supplements if you are on hormone therapy to help keep your bones strong.

How can you benefit from seeing a dietician?

- Determine your healthy weight and help you reach and maintain a healthy weight
- She will be able to assess your diet and determine whether you have need to increase or decrease any specific food in any specific food group
- If you have side effects form treatment or the cancer itself including loss of appetite, weight loss, nausea and vomiting