

Top 12 Cancer-Fighting Foods

By Dr Axe



Cancer is recognized worldwide to be a major health problem affecting millions of people each year. More than [1 million people in the United States alone get cancer each year](#), and as of 2009, a total of 562,340 deaths from cancer were projected to occur in the United States yearly.

The main reason for such a high mortality rate from cancer is due to abnormal behaviors of certain cells, which usually results in cancer cell progression, tumor growth and metastasis.

[Click here for five free cancer-fighting recipes!](#)

Are You Eating Enough Cancer-Fighting Foods Every Day?

Many cancer survivors have been fortunate enough to use a combination of **natural cancer treatments** themselves at home, in conjunction with conventional medical treatments, in order to overcome their disease. This

duel approach can help support the entire body and mind in the healing process that can sometimes be long and very difficult. Today, the early combination of chemotherapy and nutrition therapy is able to save the lives of thousands of cancer patients.

Inflammation is the underlying issue that dictates cancerous tumor initiation, progression and growth. Studies suggest that [30 percent to 40 percent of all kinds of cancer can be prevented](#) with a healthy lifestyle and dietary measures! And other sources claim that this number is in fact much higher, with around 75 percent of cancer cases being lifestyle-related.

Practicing strategies that are fully within your own control — including things like eating a [healing diet](#), vegetable juicing, consuming probiotic foods, taking immune-boosting supplements, [busting stress](#) and practicing [healing prayer](#) — can make you feel more empowered and hopeful when battling a disease, which goes a very long way in the healing process.

Foods and Habits that Increase Your Cancer Risk

Just like with heart disease, diabetes, [leaky gut syndrome and other autoimmune disorders](#), free radical damage or oxidative stress from [inflammation is truly at the root of cancer formation](#). While we often think of the word “cancer” as one type of disease, this term actually encompasses over 100 different cellular disorders in the body. Cancer refers to uncontrolled cell division that leads to a tumor or abnormal cell growth. When abnormal cells divide without control, they can invade nearby tissues and spread to other parts of the body, including the blood and lymphatic systems.

The root causes of cancer are complex and multifactorial, with possible causes including: poor diet, exposure to environmental toxins, genetics, viruses or infections, high stress levels, poor digestion and nutrient absorption, and lack of physical activity. While most people choose to turn to conventional cancer treatments like chemotherapy, radiation or other drugs, there’s also mounting evidence that cancer risk can be dramatically reduced by following a healthy diet filled with [anti-inflammatory](#)

foods and controlling other factors that kick off heightened oxidative stress, also called an “immune cascade.”

Foods that increase inflammation and cancer risk include:

- Sugar
- Refined oils
- **Refined carbohydrates**
- Conventional dairy products
- Farm-raised meats

What does work when it comes to lowering inflammation and **fighting free radical damage**? The key is consuming plenty of cancer-fighting foods with antioxidants and natural anti-inflammatory phytonutrients. This means avoiding packaged and processed foods that contain dangerous **phthalates** and focusing on only those that do not contain antibiotics, chemicals or toxins. Buying foods that are organic, grass-fed, pasture-raised and additive-free can greatly lower the toxic load of your diet.

Findings from the 2010 European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) that looked at dietary factors associated with higher cancer risks showed that there's **significant associations between cancer risk and low intakes of certain nutrients**. Data from the investigation that was published in the *European Journal of Cancer* showed an inverse association between higher intakes of vitamin C, carotenoids, retinol, α -tocopherol and fiber with overall cancer risk.

After following over 519,978 participants living in 10 European nations, results showed that those who most closely followed a style of eating similar to the **Mediterranean diet** were the most protected. High intake of cancer-fighting foods like vegetables, fruit, fish, **calcium-rich foods** and fiber was associated with a decreased risk of colorectal, lung and breast cancers, while red and processed meat intake, alcohol intake, unhealthy body mass index (BMI), and abdominal obesity were associated with an increased risk. Being physically active and obtaining enough vitamin D also helped lower cancer susceptibility.

What does this mean in terms of choosing the very best cancer-fighting foods that you can? Lots of fruit and vegetables can help lower the risk of cancer and offer protective elements so these should be the bases of your

diet. On top of that, obtaining enough healthy proteins and fatty acids keeps your immune system working properly and prevents muscle wasting, deficiencies, or hormonal and nerve problems.

Top 12 Cancer-Fighting Foods

1. Leafy Green Vegetables

Leafy greens are the cornerstone of any healthy diet since they're exceptionally rich in vitamins, minerals, antioxidants and enzymes, yet very low in calories, fats, sodium and other toxins. Leafy greens of all kinds — **nutritious spinach, kale, collard greens**, romaine, **arugula salad**, watercress, etc. — are rich in antioxidants known to combat cancer, including vitamin C and beta-carotene (a type of **vitamin A**).

And the benefits keep coming; as natural sources of glucosinolates, they also contain antibacterial and antiviral properties, inactivate carcinogens, help reprogram cancer cells to die off, and prevent tumor formation and metastasis. These powerhouse chemicals are known to break down during the chewing and digestion process into biologically active compounds that prevent cancer cells growth, which are referred to as indoles, thiocyanates and isothiocyanates.

Isothiocyanates (ITCs) found in leafy greens, which are made from glucosinolates, have been reported to help detox your body at the cellular level. Add a handful of leafy greens to your lunch and dinner to increase your nutrient intake; to make obtaining them simpler, try **juicing vegetables for near perfect health**. Vegetable juices are very easy to digest and make yourself at home. The Gerson diet meal plan even advises cancer patients to drink 13 glasses of freshly prepared juice daily!

2. Cruciferous Vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables are known to be powerful cancer killers and some of the best **vitamin C foods** widely available. Many are rich in **glutathione**, known as the body's "master antioxidant" since it has high free-radical-scavenging abilities. Nearly all members of the brassica family of cruciferous vegetables are nutrient-dense sources of a family of

phytochemicals called isothiocyanates that are linked to cancer prevention. In addition to isothiocyanates, cruciferous veggies like cabbage and [broccoli](#) also contain sulforaphanes and indoles — two types of strong antioxidants and stimulators of detoxifying enzymes that protect the structure of DNA.

Add one or two kinds — including broccoli, [cauliflower](#), cabbage or [Brussels sprouts](#) — to three mostly plant-based meals daily in the form of roasted veggies, soups or stir fries, or dip them into [hummus](#) or Greek yogurt for a healthy, fast snack. Additionally, many other vegetables are beneficial for lowering cancer risk, including onions, zucchini, asparagus, [artichokes](#), peppers, carrots and [beets](#).

3. Berries

The ORAC scores of nearly all berries are very high, making them some of the [top high-antioxidant foods](#) in the world. [Blueberries](#), raspberries, [cherries](#), [strawberries](#), goji berries, camu camu and blackberries are easy to find and use in numerous types of recipes — which is good news considering they supply vitamin C, vitamin A and gallic acid, a powerful antifungal/antiviral agent that increases immunity.

Berries are especially rich in proanthocyanidin antioxidants, which have been observed to have anti-aging properties in several animal studies and are capable of lowering free radical damage. High amounts of phenols, zeaxanthin, lycopene, cryptoxanthin, lutein and polysaccharides are other berry benefits. Less familiar “superfoods” mulberry, camu camu and [goji berries](#) have been used in traditional Chinese medicine since around 200 B.C. to increase immunity and energy, so look for those in powder or dried form in health food stores and online.

4. Brightly Orange-Colored Fruits and Veggies (Citrus Fruits, Squash, Sweet Potatoes, etc.)

Brightly colored pigments found in plant foods are a sure sign that they're beaming with phytochemicals, especially carotenoid antioxidants. This is exactly the reason you want to “eat the rainbow” and vary the colors of the foods on your plate.

[Carotenoids \(alpha-carotene, beta-carotene, lycopene, lutein, cryptoxanthin\)](#) are derivatives of vitamin A found in many citrus

fruits, [sweet potatoes](#), berries, pumpkin, squashes and other plant foods. One of the most researched is beta-carotene, an essential nutrient for immune functioning; detoxification; liver health; and fighting cancers of the skin, eyes and organs.

Two nutrients that give these foods their signature dark hues include lutein and zeaxanthin, which have been shown to help prevent eye and skin-related disorders since they act as antioxidants that filter harmful high-energy blue wavelengths, protecting healthy cells in the process.

When it comes to carbohydrate-rich veggies, studies show that complex carbs, including sweet potatoes, carrots, beets, other tubers and whole-grain foods, is related to a reduced risk of several types of cancer, particularly of the upper digestive tract. This is likely due to a favorable role of fiber, but the issue is still open to discussion. In contrast, refined grain intake and [high glycemic load foods are associated with increased risk of different types of cancer](#), including breast and colorectal.

5. Fresh Herbs and Spices

Turmeric, which contains the active ingredient curcumin, has been shown to decrease tumor size and fight colon and breast cancer. Along with easy-to-use black pepper, turmeric absorption is enhanced and better able to fight inflammation. Aim for one teaspoon of turmeric powder and 1/4 teaspoon of black pepper or more daily, which can easily be used in a tonic drink, with eggs or in a veggie stir fry. You can also take curcumin supplements; aim for 1,000 milligrams daily.

Additionally, other herbs that act as **immune system boosters** include ginger, **raw garlic**, thyme, cayenne pepper, oregano, **basil** and parsley — which can easily be used in many recipes, juices, dressings and smoothies.

6. Organic Meats

Organic meats including beef or chicken liver are recommended on many cancer-fighting diets since they're considered some of the most nutrient-dense foods on the planet and extremely high in **vitamin B12**. Consuming organic meats as part of a “nose to tail” approach to eating animal proteins

provides minerals that help **cleanse the liver** and enhance the ability to remove toxins from the blood and digestive tract.

Detoxifying with rich sources of **selenium**, zinc and B vitamins helps purify blood; produce the bile needed to digest fats; **balance hormones naturally**; and store essential vitamins, minerals and iron. These mineral-rich foods can help counteract the effects of alcohol, prescription drugs, hormone disruptions, high triglyceride levels, **low potassium**, obesity and viral infections.

7. Cultured Dairy Products

Cultured dairy products are a rich source of “good bacteria” probiotics, which are microorganisms that promote a natural bacterial balance in your intestinal microflora and help increase immunity. Over 80 percent of your immune system is housed in your gut, so it’s no surprise that **probiotic foods** and supplementation can stop tumor growth and help cells renew.

One of the easiest ways to consume more probiotics is in their most natural state, which includes **raw milk** products such as cheese, **kefir** and yogurt. Raw and cultured are key here, since fermentation produces probiotics but high heat processing used to pasteurize dairy can damage many of the vital nutrients, including the enzymes, proteins and probiotics. Most dairy today is loaded with hormones, antibiotics, pain killers and pesticide residue so buying organic is also important.

Aim for six ounces of cultured dairy daily (**probiotic yogurt**, cottage cheese, **goat milk** kefir or amasai). Cottage cheese, which is rich in sulfur protein and saturated fats, was found to be especially beneficial as part of the **Budwig diet for cancer protocol**. You can also increase your probiotic food intake without dairy by consuming cultured vegetables like kimchi, sauerkraut, coconut kefir, **kombucha** or **natto**.

8. Nuts and Seeds

Chia seeds and **flaxseeds** are two of the most nutrient-dense seeds in the world. They provide fiber, omega-3 fatty acids and a range of important minerals. **Hemp seeds**, sesame seeds, pumpkin seeds and **sunflower seeds** are also beneficial and full of healthy fatty acids, as are **walnuts**, brazil nuts and almonds. Their health benefits and are best **sprouted** and

Foods that Increase Cancer Risk



× SUGAR



× REFINED OILS



× REFINED CARBS



× CONVENTIONAL DAIRY



× FARM-RAISED MEAT

Cancer-Fighting Foods



LEAFY GREENS



CRUCIFEROUS VEGGIES



BERRIES



BRIGHT ORANGE FRUITS & VEGETABLES



FRESH HERBS & SPICES



ORGANIC MEAT



CULTURED DAIRY



NUTS AND SEEDS



UNREFINED OILS



MUSHROOMS



TRADITIONAL TEA



WILD-CAUGHT FISH

Cancer-Fighting Supplements

OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS
 SUPERFOODS
 ESSENTIAL OILS
 VITAMIN D
 POTASSIUM COMPOUND

VITAMIN C
 PANCREATIC ENZYMES
 PROBIOTICS
 VITAMIN B12/
 B VITAMIN COMPLEX

can be used easily in smoothies, baked goods and with yogurt. Aim for two tablespoons daily.

9. Healthy Unrefined Oils (Coconut, Flax, Cod Liver and Extra Virgin Olive Oil)

Did you know that your brain and nervous system control the function of your entire body and that about 60 percent of your nervous system is made up of fatty acids? The problem is that many of the conventional processed fats and oils widely consumed today are hydrogenated oils that are capable of destroying the membranes of our cells, leading to diseased cells and toxicity.

Refined and rancid fats create problems throughout your entire body, leading to lower immune function, cell congestion and inflammation that kicks off disease. Replace refined vegetable oils, hydrogenated oils and trans fats with quality oils, including flax oil, **extra virgin olive oil**, cod oil and **coconut oil**. These nourish your gut and promote better immune function, help you reach and maintain a healthy weight, plus flaxseed and cod liver oil contain essential **omega-3 fatty acids** that can help energize your cells.

10. Mushrooms

Nutritious mushrooms vary in terms of their benefits, taste and appearance since hundreds of mushroom species are in existence today, but all are known to be immune-enhancers and many have been used to fight cancer for centuries. Reishi, cordyceps and maitake in particular can improve immune function and cell regeneration. Look for them in capsule or tincture form, and cook with them whole whenever possible too.

11. Traditional Teas

Metastasis is the most deadly aspect of cancer and results from several connected processes including cell proliferation, angiogenesis, cell adhesion, migration and invasion into the surrounding tissue. Metastasis is the principal cause of death among cancer patients, so it's one of the most important issues in cancer research today. Several clinical and epidemiological studies have reported that the consumption of green tea can help decrease cancer risk. Green tea contains major polyphenolic compounds, including *epigallocatechin-3-gallate*, which has been shown

to [inhibit tumor invasion and angiogenesis](#), which are essential for tumor growth and metastasis.

Teas derived from the leaves of the plant *Camellia sinensis* are commonly consumed as beverages around the world, including green, black or oolong tea. While all traditional teas seem to be beneficial, the most significant effects on human health have been attributed to green tea, such as [matcha green tea](#). It contains the highest percentage of polyphenolic compounds, catechin, gallic acid and EGCG.

The antioxidant EGCG appears to be the most potent of all the catechins, and its anticancer effects have activity about 25–100 times more effective than that of vitamins C and E! EGCG has been reported to be linked to the modulation of multiple signaling pathways, finally resulting in the downregulation of expression of proteins involved in the invasiveness of cancer cells.

12. Wild-Caught Fish

According to a 2004 study conducted by researchers at the Recherche Institute of Pharmacology, [higher fish consumption is another favorable diet indicator of better immune function](#). The study, which investigated the cancer-fighting effects of the Mediterranean diet, found that people who reported eating less fish and more frequent red meat showed several common neoplasms in their blood that suggested higher susceptibility.

Wild and especially small fish, including [salmon](#), mackerel and [sardines](#) are anti-inflammatory [omega-3 foods](#) that are correlated with better brain, hormonal and nervous system health. [Omega-3 fatty acids exert anti-inflammatory effects](#), and therefore recent studies have connected them to cancer prevention and natural enhancement of antitumour therapies. Evidence suggests a role for omega-3 fatty acid supplementation in cancer prevention and reducing symptoms of treatments like chemotherapy. Omega-3s have been shown to preserve muscle mass and function in chemotherapy cancer patients and to contribute to a reduced inflammatory response resulting from the treatment's toxicity.

Other Natural Remedies to Boost Immunity

Supplements: While supplements can never replace a healthy diet and lifestyle, they can be very useful for helping the body recover and filling nutrient deficiencies. Studies have shown that people who consume more selenium, folic acid, vitamin B12, vitamin D, chlorophyll and antioxidants [have better protection from disease](#). A supplementary use of oral **digestive enzymes** and probiotics is also an effective anticancer dietary measure.

Supplements that act as natural therapeutic medications include:

- Vitamin C
- Pancreatic enzymes
- Probiotics
- Potassium compound
- Vitamin B12 or a B vitamin complex
- Omega-3 fatty acids
- Superfoods including chlorophyll, **spirulina**, raw cocoa and blue-green algae

Essential oils:

Frankincense essential oil (*Boswellia serrata*) has been clinically shown to be a vital treatment for various forms of cancer, including breast, brain, colon and prostate cancers. Frankincense has the ability to help regulate cellular epigenetic function, which positively influences genes to promote healing. Rub frankincense essential oil on your body (neck area) three times daily and take three drops internally in eight ounces of water three times daily as part of a natural prevention plan. Other helpful anti-inflammatory [essential oils](#) include clove, rose, tea tree and **oregano oils**.

Getting sunshine and vitamin D: Vitamin D is a fat-soluble vitamin that acts similarly to a hormone in our bodies. The best way to naturally obtain enough is through direct exposure to the sun, although eating certain **vitamin D-rich foods** like salmon and eggs can help, as can taking a high-quality supplement.

Clinical research shows that [vitamin D can help prevent cancer](#) best when you acquire about 50–70 nanograms per milliliter daily. Cover your bases of vitamin D3 through getting 20 minutes of sun exposure every day, ideally between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. with 40 percent of your entire body exposed to the sun. You can also take an oral supplement containing around 5,000 to 10,000 IUs of D3 every day; I recommend an effective combination formula of astaxanthin and [omega-3 fish oils](#) with vitamin D3 taken together.

Cancer-Fighting Foods Recipes

The No. 1 thing to do immediately to protect yourself from cancer is to improve your diet. Focus on filling your plate with nutrient-dense vegetables first, and then add in all of the other components that make up a healthy diet. Here's some recipes to get you started:

- [Anti-Inflammatory Juice Recipe](#)
- [Pumpkin Blueberry Pancakes Recipe](#)
- [Kale Chips Recipe](#)
- [Gluten-Free Cauliflower Mac and Cheese Recipe](#)
- [Teriyaki Baked Salmon Recipe](#)