

## Nutrition and Cancer Prevention

### *Community Cancer Care*

**Linda Germaine-Miller**



**Weymouth** - Seniors are consistently reminded about the importance of a healthy lifestyle. There are lots of reasons we why should try to lose weight, eat well and stay active. Recently, medical reports point to another reason why we should jump on the wellness bandwagon. It may help to prevent cancer.

Whether you're in good health or you're a cancer survivor, the following recommendations can help you feel better, look better and reduce your risks for many kinds of cancer.

### **Weight And Diet**

It's hard to avoid sweet temptation, but it's worth trying when you weigh the risks, including overall increased risk of cancer in overweight individuals. Also, endometrial, colon, kidney, pancreatic and breast cancer seem to be linked to obesity or inactivity.

If you're already overweight, consider that even a 5% to 10% weight loss can make a difference. Strive to be as lean as possible within normal body weight range, aiming for a Body Mass Index (BMI) between 19 and 24. As you age, you may lose muscle mass. For this reason, your doctor might want your BMI to be slightly higher than the target range—check with your nutritionist or physician for more information. (To calculate your BMI divide your weight in pounds by your height in inches, squared; then multiply result by 703).

Here are some guidelines for cancer prevention:

- Adopt a plant-based diet to help prevent cancer and cardiovascular disease.
- Consume fruits and vegetables with intense color as they contain higher levels of nutrients—for example, broccoli, spinach, red pepper, carrots, blueberries, and peaches.

- Limit your intake of red meat to three to four ounces, three to four times a week.
- Avoid processed meat such as bacon, sausage and cold cuts.
- Replace red meat with fish, poultry and legumes such as soybeans, pinto beans, chick peas, lentils and black-eyed peas. These leaner protein foods may lower your risk of cardiovascular diseases.
- Reduce your sodium intake; avoid canned and dehydrated soups, salted crackers and fast food.
- Limit refined starchy foods (such as white bread, processed cereals, pastry, cookies, and cakes), sugary drinks (like soda and fruit punch), and fruit juices, unless otherwise advised by your physician.
- Eat high-fiber foods such as vegetables, whole fruits, legumes, brown rice, and rolled oats to help prevent colon cancer and reduce risk of cardiovascular disease.

### **Physical Activity**

Being a couch potato can be risky. So think about walking away from the TV and into the outdoors or a health club. This will especially reduce your risk of breast and colon cancer. In bad weather, go for a walk at the mall or in the corridors of your apartment building.

Try to be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day. Even if you're indoors, you can benefit from seated exercise videos such as "armchair fitness."

So why not set a goal for a healthier lifestyle? A good place to start is with a consultation with your doctor, who can advise about dietary supplements and special considerations if you're taking medicine.

By taking control, you have much to gain...other than added pounds!

### **About The Author**

*Linda Germaine-Miller, MS, RD, CDE is a Nutritionist at the **Commonwealth Atrius Cancer Center (CACC)** in Weymouth. CACC, a collaboration between Commonwealth Hematology-Oncology (CHO) and Atrius Health, is a comprehensive, freestanding cancer center with all non-surgical cancer services under one roof. For more information, visit [www.commonwealthatrius.com](http://www.commonwealthatrius.com), [www.chomed.com](http://www.chomed.com), [www.atrusheralth.org](http://www.atrusheralth.org) or call CACC at 1-888-829-8252.*