



Adopting a Plant-Based Diet

Cancer experts agree that eating a variety of colorful fruit and vegetables, grains, and legumes (dried peas and beans) aids in the fight against cancer. By making simple diet and lifestyle changes, you may reduce your risk for cancer recurrence as well as your risk for other chronic diseases like heart disease and diabetes mellitus.

A plant-based diet emphasizes vegetables, fruits, legumes, and whole grains. These foods are good sources of protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamins, and minerals. They are also naturally lower in calories than foods made from animals. Colorful plant foods are also good sources of *phytochemicals*. Phytochemicals are naturally present in plant foods, and they can help to protect our body's cells from damage by cancer-causing agents. They also help support overall health. Eating a plant-based diet does not mean that you have to become a vegetarian; it just means that you should try to select most of your foods from plant sources.

The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommends these guidelines for adopting a plant-based diet using their New American Plate*:

- ◆ Plant-based foods like vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans should cover two thirds or more of the plate. Fish, poultry, meat, or low-fat dairy foods should cover no more than one third of the plate.
- ◆ Include substantial portions of one or more vegetables or fruits on your plate—not just grain products like pasta or whole-grain bread.
- ◆ Eat five or more servings every day of a variety of colorful vegetables and fruits.
- ◆ Eat more than seven servings a day of a variety of grains (breads, cereals, pasta, and rice), legumes, and tubers (potatoes and sweet potatoes).
- ◆ Choose minimally processed foods and limit consumption of refined sugar.

*The New American Plate® is available from the AICR by calling 800/843-8114 or through the Web site <http://www.aicr.org>.

Plant Foods That Are Good Sources of Protein

- ◆ Legumes and lentils (peas and beans, such as kidney, great northern, pinto, and black beans)
- ◆ Nuts and seeds
- ◆ Foods from soy, such as soy milk, tofu, tempeh, and edamame (soy beans)

Note: Grains, rice, cereals, and vegetables contain some protein and contribute to total protein intake.

Plant Foods That Are Good Sources of Complex Carbohydrates and Fiber

- ◆ Cereals made from whole grains
- ◆ Cornmeal
- ◆ Fresh, frozen, dried, and canned fruit
- ◆ Fresh, frozen, dried, and canned vegetables
- ◆ Nuts and seeds
- ◆ White converted, brown, and wild rice
- ◆ Pasta, preferably made with whole grains or vegetables
- ◆ Whole-grain flour tortillas
- ◆ Whole grains such as wheat, oats, barley, rye, and corn

Plant Foods That Are Good Sources of Fat and Calories

- ◆ Nuts and seeds
- ◆ Olives and olive oil
- ◆ Soybeans and soybean oil
- ◆ Vegetable oils, such as canola, safflower, sunflower, or flaxseed oil
- ◆ Vegetable oil margarines

Resources

Becoming Vegan: The Complete Guide to Adopting a Healthy Plant-Based Diet, by Brenda Davis, RD, and Vesanto Melina, MS, RD (Book Publishing Co., 2000).

Becoming Vegetarian: The Complete Guide to Adopting a Healthy Vegetarian Diet, by Vesanto Melina, MS, RD, Brenda Davis, RD, and Victoria Harris, RD (Book Publishing Co., 1995).

Cooking Vegetarian, by Vesanto Melina, MS, RD, and Joseph Forest (Book Publishing Co., 1996).

What Color Is Your Diet?: The 7 Colors of Health, by David Heber, MD, PhD, with Susan Bowerman, MS, RD (Regan Books, 2001).

Vegetarian Cooking for Dummies, by Suzanne Havala, MS, RD (John Wiley and Sons, 2001).

Add Color to Your Diet

Consider adopting a plant-based diet for better health. Plant foods are truly rich sources of important nutrients, and by eating fruits and vegetables of different colors, you will get a wider range of phytochemicals.

Color Code System for Fruits and Vegetables

Color	Examples of Colorful Foods
Red Phytochemical: lycopene	Tomatoes, tomato products, pink grapefruit, and watermelon
Red/Purple Phytochemical: anthocyanins	Grapes, grape juice, prunes, cranberries, blackberries, strawberries, red apples, and red wine
Orange Phytochemical: carotenoids	Carrots, mangos, apricots, cantaloupe, pumpkin, acorn squash, winter squash, and sweet potatoes
Orange/Yellow Phytochemical: beta cryptothanxin	Orange juice, oranges, tangerines, peaches, papaya, and nectarines
Yellow/Green Phytochemicals: lutein and zeaxanthin	Spinach; collard, turnip, and mustard greens; yellow corn; green peas; avocados; and honeydew melon
Green Phytochemicals: indoles and sulforaphanes	Cabbage, broccoli, brussels sprouts, and kale
White/Green Phytochemicals: allicin, quercetin, and flavinoids	Leeks, onions, garlic, chives, white grape juice, and white wine