

# Diet and prostate cancer

This fact sheet is for men who want to know more about how to improve their diet. It describes a healthy diet that may benefit men who want to help prevent prostate cancer or who have already been diagnosed. The fact sheet discusses the various food types and why they are important. It does not recommend a fixed diet but instead suggests how to make sensible changes to ensure you are eating healthily. This fact sheet does not cover eating problems caused by prostate cancer or its treatment. For information on this, ask your doctor to refer you to a State Registered Dietitian or call our free and confidential Helpline on 0800 074 8383.

## Why should I improve my diet?

There are several factors that can increase your risk of getting prostate cancer. These include increasing age, an African Caribbean background, a family history of prostate cancer and diet. You cannot alter most of these risk factors; however one thing you can control is your diet. By improving your diet, you can take control over your own health and actively do something to improve it. This will also have other health benefits such as reducing your risk of heart disease and diabetes. Research is emerging which suggests that some foods not only help to prevent prostate cancer, but may also slow down the growth of prostate cancer in men who already have the disease or reduce the chance of prostate cancer returning after treatment.

## The Western diet

Westerners have higher rates of prostate cancer than people living in Far Eastern countries such as China and Japan. However, prostate cancer rates have increased in men who have migrated from Japan to the USA. Researchers think that this may be due to the Western diet. This view is supported by the fact that cancer rates have been increasing in Eastern countries since more people have begun

to eat more Western foods. Over the last 50 years, the British diet has included less fruit and vegetables and more saturated fats and meat products. This change may increase the risk of men developing prostate cancer over many years.

## Prevention of prostate cancer

The exact link between diet and prostate cancer is unclear. One of the reasons for this is because our diet is made up of so many different foods. Scientists have not yet identified all of the nutrients that are involved in protecting the body from cancer and those which may cause the disease.

Several studies have shown that eating certain foods may reduce your risk of developing prostate cancer, reduce the likelihood of prostate cancer coming back after treatment, or help slow down progression of the disease. More research is needed to support these findings before we can say for sure whether certain foods can benefit men worried about, or diagnosed with, prostate cancer. We also do not know whether changing your diet later on in life can prevent prostate cancer.

However, by improving your diet your overall health will benefit and you will reduce your risk of developing health problems such as heart disease and diabetes and may protect against other cancers.

### How can I make changes to my diet?

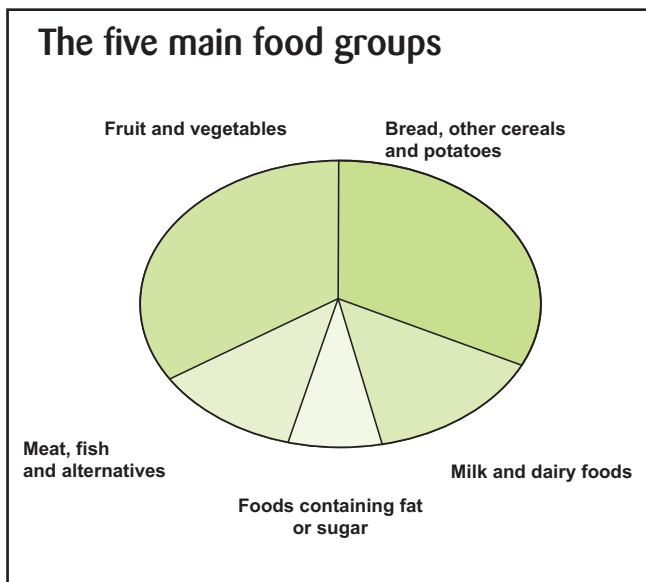
Finding reliable information on healthy eating can be an overwhelming and confusing task. This fact sheet suggests ways of making changes to your diet, which may reduce your risk of prostate cancer and improve your overall health. You may find it easier to stick to your new diet if you introduce small changes gradually and set yourself goals.

You must feel happy with your new diet. Eating meals with family and friends is an important part of every day life and changes to your diet should not reduce the pleasure of these social events.

Try to cut down on unhealthy foods but do not totally exclude whole groups of food from your diet. All food groups play a part in making sure you have a balanced diet. Cutting out one food group completely can make it difficult to get the right balance of nutrients that you need. In general, a diet that is good for your heart is also good for your prostate. Ask your doctor to refer you to a Registered Dietitian if you are making big changes to your diet or if you have any other medical conditions that could be affected by your diet.

### What is a healthy diet?

The picture below shows the five main food groups and the proportions that you should aim to include in your diet.



### For a healthy diet:

- Base your meals on starchy foods like potatoes, rice and pasta. Try wholegrain options such as wholemeal bread, wholewheat pasta and wholegrain breakfast cereals. These are high in fibre and also help you to feel full for longer.
- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Include some protein, like fish, skinless chicken and pulses.
- Eat a low-fat diet.
- Cut down on sugar. The healthy daily limit is 70 grams or 17 teaspoons. This includes sugar hidden in soft drinks and processed foods such as cakes and biscuits.
- Cut down on salt. Eat less than one and a quarter teaspoons each day and look out for hidden salt in processed foods. Try using herbs and spices to add flavour when cooking.
- Drink six to eight glasses of water each day. Avoid sugary or fizzy drinks.

You should be able to get all the nutrients you need by eating a balanced diet rather than taking supplements. Supplements may not contain all the beneficial nutrients that are found naturally in food and we do not fully understand the possible harm of taking supplements. Your doctor may recommend supplements in particular cases. For example they may advise you to take calcium supplements if you are on hormone therapy and you are not getting enough calcium from your diet.

### A healthy weight

We do not yet fully understand how obesity affects the risk of prostate cancer but it may be linked to an increased risk of aggressive or advanced disease. If you have been diagnosed with prostate cancer, being a healthy weight may also improve the likelihood of your treatment being successful. Keeping to a healthy weight can reduce your risk of other health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.

You can measure your Body Mass Index (BMI) using the chart on page 3. Mark your weight in stone or kilograms and draw a line from top to bottom. Then mark your height in feet or metres and draw a line from left to right.









What should I eat more of?	What does it do?	How do I include it in my diet?
Fruit and vegetables	Reduces your risk of cancer and other medical problems	Eat at least five portions each day Try to include a 'rainbow of colours' in your diet
Cruciferous vegetables	May reduce your risk of getting prostate cancer	Eat more cabbage-like vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, bok choy and kale
Lycopene	May reduce your risk of prostate cancer and slow down its spread	Lycopene is found in tomatoes (particularly cooked and processed tomatoes), watermelon, pink grapefruit, guava and papaya
Green tea	May protect against development and growth of prostate cancer	Try drinking green tea in place of any hot drinks you have throughout the day
Oily fish	Fats in oily fish may help prevent prostate cancer developing and growing	Eat fresh, canned or frozen oily fish two or three times each week Examples of oily fish include sardines, pilchards, mackerel, salmon, tuna (fresh or frozen tuna only) and shrimp
Soy	May reduce the risk of prostate cancer	Choose traditional forms of soy such as tofu, miso and tempeh, available from supermarkets and health food shops
Pulses	May help to prevent prostate cancer	Include more beans, peas and lentils in your diet
Whole grains	May reduce your risk of several cancers, including prostate cancer	Whole grain foods include brown bread, whole grain cereals, whole grain pasta

## More information

### The Prostate Cancer Charity

This fact sheet is part of the Tool Kit. Call our Helpline on **0800 074 8383** or visit our website at **www.prostate-cancer.org.uk** for more Tool Kit fact sheets, including an **A to Z of medical words** which explains some of the words and phrases used in this sheet.

### www.5aday.nhs.uk

This website from the Department of Health provides tips on how to include five portions of fruit and vegetables in your daily diet.

### British Dietetic Association

[www.bda.uk.com](http://www.bda.uk.com)

5th Floor, Charles House, 148/9 Great Charles Street Queensway, Birmingham, B3 3HT  
Telephone: 0121 200 8080

For information on finding a state registered dietitian and following a healthy diet.

The Prostate Cancer Charity makes every effort to make sure that its services provide up-to-date, unbiased and accurate facts about prostate cancer. We hope that these will add to the medical advice you have had and will help you to make any decisions you may face. Please do continue to talk to your doctor if you are worried about any medical issues.

The Prostate Cancer Charity funds research into the causes of and treatments for, prostate cancer. We also provide support and information to anyone concerned about prostate cancer. We rely on charitable donations to continue this work. If you would like to make a donation, please call us on 020 8222 7666.

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Reviewed October 2008  
To be reviewed October 2010

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A charity registered in England and Wales(1005541) and in Scotland (SCO39332)

### **British Nutrition Foundation**

[www.nutrition.org.uk](http://www.nutrition.org.uk)  
High Holborn House, 52-54 High Holborn,  
London WC1V 6RQ  
Telephone: 020 7404 6504  
Information on a healthy diet and how diet may be linked to cancer.

### **Food Standards Agency**

[www.food.gov.uk](http://www.food.gov.uk)  
Telephone: 020 7276 8829  
An independent watchdog to protect the public's health and consumer interests in relation to food. Also provides information about healthy eating.

### **Penny Brohn Cancer Care**

[www.pennybrohncancercare.org](http://www.pennybrohncancercare.org)  
Chapel Pill Lane, Pill, Bristol, BS20 0HH  
National helpline: 0845 123 23 10  
Free healthy eating guidelines available from the website or helpline.

### **World Cancer Research Fund**

[www.wcrf-uk.org](http://www.wcrf-uk.org)  
19 Harley Street, London, W1G 9QJ  
Telephone: 020 7343 4200  
Provides information on cancer and diet.

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References to sources of information used in the production of this fact sheet are available on our website.

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