

The Lost Book



of Health

By Grace Andrews

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Introduction

Cancer: an ounce of prevention is worth (at least) a pound of cure.

Almost everyone knows somebody who has battled cancer. The number of people who will be diagnosed with cancer at some time in their life is in the hundreds of millions. Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States – that’s a massive amount of suffering as a result of the disease. And even for survivors, it can be a struggle to overcome treatment side effects and long-term physical, mental, relationship, and financial consequences of cancer itself. No wonder, then, that experts in the field are doing their best to find a cure for cancer. But there is something even better than a cure when it comes to cancer, and that’s preventing it in the first place.

Cancer is about abnormal cell growth and preventing it means keeping cell growth at the right level. And that’s where your diet and lifestyle can play a role in either making cancer more likely or less likely. The goal is to make choices on a daily basis that encourage your cells to grow and die as they should rather than to reproduce over and over and over as happens in cancer.

There are certain things we can’t change - like our age and our genetics - but there are also many choices we can make that can reduce our risk of developing cancer. These choices relate to what they call “modifiable risk factors” (and opposed to unmodifiable ones like how old you are) and include our diet, our lifestyle, and the environment in which we live.

Cancer rates didn’t use to be so high. Part of the reason for that is probably that people died much younger in the old days. In other words, they didn’t live long enough to develop the disease. But part of the reason cancer rates are higher in this day and age may be because we have lost touch with a way of living make cancer less likely. And that’s why, looking at how our ancestors ate and spent their days has something to offer our cancer prevention efforts right here, right now.

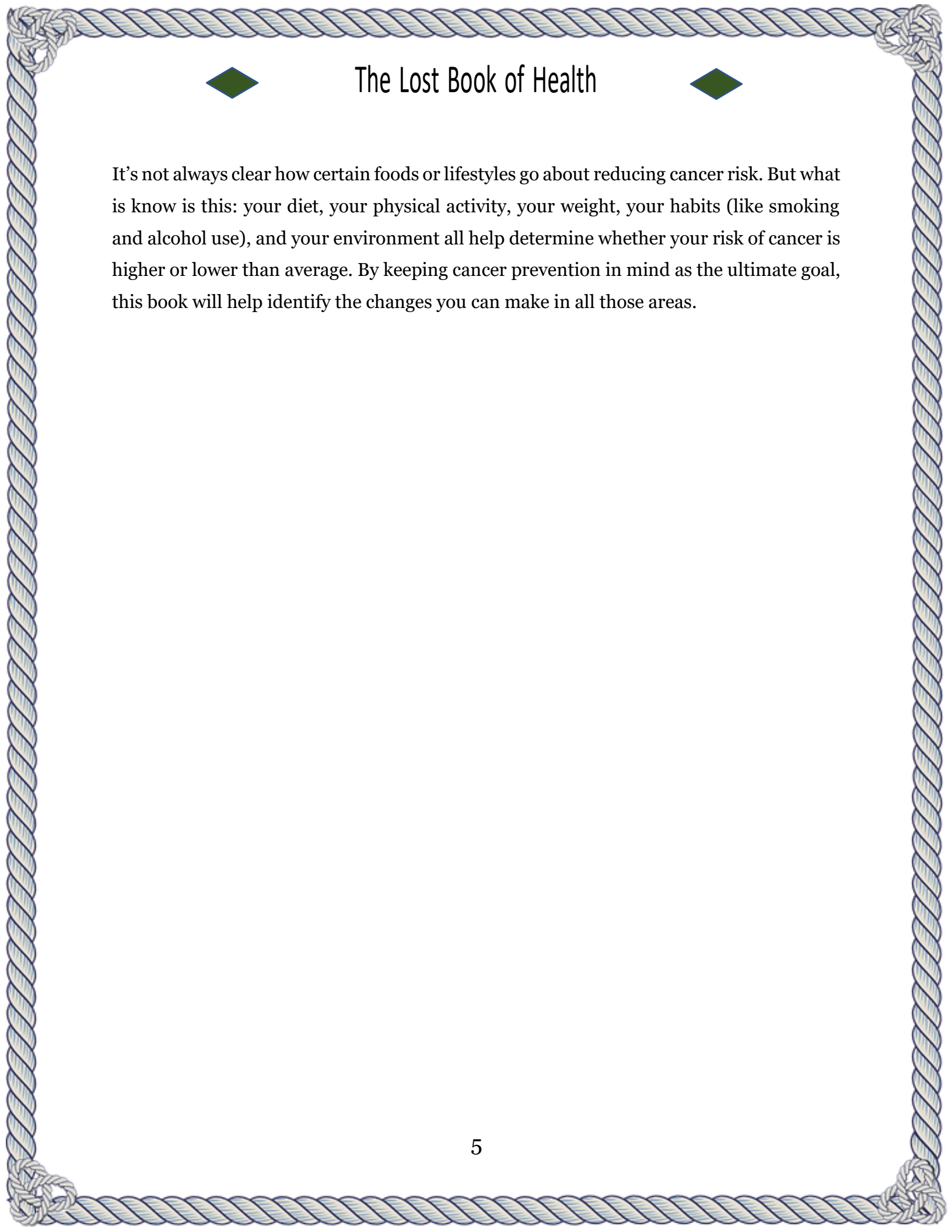
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Preventing cancer means you can avoid all the time, energy, and cost associated with cancer treatment. It also means that you're not reliant on medications that might not always be available – for example during a natural disaster or international crisis. Preventing cancer is also an investment in staying healthy for the long haul – so you can continue to live the life you enjoy rather than spending your time, fatigued from fighting the disease.

Thankfully, many of the things associated with lower rates of cancer have other advantages. For example, eating certain foods isn't only linked to reduced incidence of cancer but also to reduced rates of heart disease, type two diabetes, and stroke. In other words, some of the things our forefathers did for hundreds of years (like eating a lot more fruits and vegetables than the average North American or European) offers a lot of bang for their buck. All in all, there are so many good reasons for putting time into cancer prevention.

Remember that making healthy choices doesn't guarantee that you won't be diagnosed with cancer at some time in the future. And keep in mind that an association doesn't tell you what's causing what. So, when scientists tell us that blueberries are **associated** with a reduced rate of cancer, it doesn't necessarily mean that blueberries are what's **causing** the reduction. Maybe people who eat a lot of blueberries also eat a lot of other healthy foods or like to exercise more than average. And maybe those are the things that are keeping the person cancer-free. Nevertheless, it is possible that it **is** the blueberries that are making a difference. And that's why for some people, an association is enough to get them thinking about how to add a cup of blueberries to their daily diet. A

This book is going to fill you in on some of what we know about cancer prevention when it comes to food, lifestyle and your environment. As you might expect, not all the studies agree when it comes to what is or isn't associated with lower rates of cancer. But even so, all the information included in this book has some support in the scientific literature – it's not just based on speculation and hearsay.



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It's not always clear how certain foods or lifestyles go about reducing cancer risk. But what is know is this: your diet, your physical activity, your weight, your habits (like smoking and alcohol use), and your environment all help determine whether your risk of cancer is higher or lower than average. By keeping cancer prevention in mind as the ultimate goal, this book will help identify the changes you can make in all those areas.

Disclaimer:

This book is not a substitute for professional medical care. The information contained in this book is provided for educational reasons and is not the rendering of professional services. Your healthcare professional can provide specific and customized recommendations related to cancer prevention. And It's also very important to remember that medical plants and other natural substances can be very toxic – and even lethal – unless taken in the right form, right amount, and with the appropriate professional supervision. For that reason, the information included in this book should not be viewed as a prescription. It's a starting point to help you consider the possibilities when it comes to cancer prevention. Science discovers something new every day – including in the field of cancer prevention and treatment. So, this book provides a sampling of what know rather than offering the final say on how best to reduce your risk of developing cancer. Keep your eye on the latest developments from the scientific community – you'll want to make sure that your cancer prevention efforts reflect the most recent research in the field.

- Chapter One -
Nutrition and Cancer:
Make It Your Friend, Not Your
Foe

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It's been said that about 30% of cancers have a dietary link. That a sizeable chunk of those suffering from the disease. It makes sense then to take a long hard look at the healthy foods that played a big role in the daily diet at a time when cancer rates weren't so high.

How can certain food reduce cancer rates? The theory is that foods contain all sorts of nutrients that can interfere with cancer in several ways:

- Protect cells from the damage that comes with aging
- Speed up the death of cancer cells
- Interfere with the growth of cancer cells
- Reduce chronic inflammation

And remember, changing your diet to one that is associated with a lower risk of cancer, doesn't have to happen overnight. Some people do best when they go cold turkey – giving up their daily serving of bacon overnight. But some people are all about slow and steady winning the race. If that's the case for you, adding potential cancer fighters to your diet may be easier than suddenly banning ham from your plate.

There is still work to be done before the foods and medicinal plants discussed below can be declared with 100% certainty to cause a drop in cancer rates. But, given how common cancer is and how deadly the disease it can be, it makes sense to take a look at ways nature might be able to help keep that disease at bay.

Fruits and vegetables

You'll notice that there are a lot of fruits and vegetables included on the list of foods associated with lower rates of cancer. And if there is one word that's important when discussing the potential of foods to prevent disease, it's phytonutrient. That word comes up again and again in the scientific literature, and it's just a fancy way of saying "plant nutrient." And plant nutrients come with all sorts of abilities – including helping improve the immune system, killing off abnormal cells (e.g., precancerous or cancerous cells), protecting healthy cells from damage, reducing inflammation and all the nasty chemicals

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that can come with inflammation, and slowing down cells that are dividing too fast (as is the case for cancerous cells). Knowing all that, it should come as no surprise that many of the foods identified as being worth investigation for the prevention and treatment of cancer are chock full of phytonutrients. Keep that in mind the next time you find yourself that grocery store.

Keep in mind that it's not enough to have a serving or two of fruit and vegetables during the day if you want to have your best shot at staying healthy (and cancer free). In fact, the recommendation is that each of us has 9-13 servings of fruit and veggies per day. More specifically, it's been said that you'll need to eat between 400 and 600 g a day of fruits and vegetables in order to take full advantage of the cancer prevention benefits of this food group. Either way, it's time to get out the mini- carrots!

The fruits and vegetables listed below are just a sampling of what plants have to offer when it comes to phytonutrients. There are many more fruits and vegetables that are worth considering when it comes to keeping yourself cancer free.

Now, on to the list:

- **Avocado:** Chemicals derived from avocados have been shown to trigger the death of cancerous blood cells in the laboratory. These same chemicals have been shown to be toxic to breast, lung, liver, esophageal and colon cancer cells. It's thought that the phytochemicals found in avocado are responsible for the anti-cancer activity of this food.
- **Beets:** Beets contain high levels of antioxidants – one of the chemicals your body can use to prevent cancer and other diseases. In the laboratory, some of these chemicals have demonstrated the ability to kill colon cancer cells. And killing cancer cells helps stop them before they have a chance to get big enough to establish a solid tumor and spread. It is kind of like putting out a forest fire before it has a chance to spread and cause a real problem. So, cells may still become cancerous, but they'll be stopped in their tracks before developing into full-blown cancer.

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- **Berries:** Blueberries are sometimes referred to as a “superfood” because they have some pretty impressive health benefits, including a possible role in cancer prevention. Blueberries are specifically linked to lower rates of certain types of breast cancer.
- The same can be said for **blackberries** and **black raspberries** which also contains phytonutrients (AKA plant nutrients) that are thought to act as anti-cancer agents. And for those of you who can tolerate sour fruit, **tart cherry juice** has been shown to hasten the death of breast cancer cells.
- **Carrots** and other orange vegetables contain B-carotene, a phytonutrient that has been linked to lower rates of esophageal cancer. Sweet potato has been referred to as a medicinal food because it contains chemicals that appear to have anti-cancer and anti-inflammatory abilities. If it’s variety you’re looking for, keep in mind that purple sweet potatoes have also demonstrated anti-cancer activity.
- **Cruciferous vegetables** include white cabbage, broccoli, cauliflower, spinach and brussels sprouts. These vegetables contain phytonutrients that have been shown in the lab to interfere with a variety of cancer cells including those from breast, prostate, uterus, and colon tissue. These same vegetables have also been linked to a reduced rate of stomach cancer, a cancer with a high rate of mortality. Including spinach in your diet has been linked to a lower rate of esophageal cancer. Rutabaga roots and sprouts seem to interfere with the multiplication of cancer cells while at the same time hastening the death of the cancer cells.
- **Citrus fruits and grapes** contain chemicals that can act as antioxidants. In other words, they can protect cells against the damage that can sometimes result in cancerous changes.
- **Cranberries** contain plant chemicals that have anti-cancer effects.
- **Dark green leafy vegetables** contain phyto (plant) chemicals that can come in handy when it comes to cancer prevention. Eating leafy greens is associated with a lower risk of breast cancer.

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- **Paw Paw trees** grow naturally in Eastern North America. This tree produces banana-like fruit containing dozens and dozens of different phytochemicals with powerful biological effects – including anti-tumor activity.
- **Peaches/nectarines:** Eating more peaches or nectarines is linked to lower rates of certain types of breast cancer.
- **Plums** have been found to contain chemicals that are toxic to breast cancer cells but not, fortunately, to normal cells. Plums, peaches, and nectarines have been linked to a lower rate of head and neck cancer.
- **Pomegranate** has been used for hundreds of years to both prevent and treat health conditions. Pomegranate seeds, oil, and juice have shown promise as anti-cancer agents when tested in the lab.
- **Purple grape juice** may reduce the risk that healthy breast cells become cancerous.
- **Swiss chard:** This green, leafy vegetable contains natural chemicals (phytonutrients) that have been shown to reduce the rate at which cancer cells divide and grow. These chemicals can also increase the rate at which cancer cells die. Just like for beets, by controlling cancerous cells early on, it is possible that swiss chard can help prevent the development of full-blown cancer.

As related plants, both beets and swiss chard have been used historically for medical reasons – likely because they are so full of nutrients that can work against inflammation and other processes associated with cancer.
- **Tomatoes**, which contain a variety of nutrients, have been shown in the lab to interfere with the growth of stomach cancer cells. One of the nutrients found in tomatoes, lycopene, has been linked to reduced rate of certain types of cancer, including prostate cancer. Lycopene is also being investigated as a nutrient that may reduce the rate of head and neck cancers.
- **Watermelon** has been associated with a lower risk of a certain type of throat cancer.

Spices

Spices are multi-purpose plants. They can enhance the taste of what you're cooking for supper or baking in the oven, but they are also a source of potent phytonutrients associated with better health, including lower rates of cancer. Fortunately, because there are so many spices to choose from, you're certain to find one that you can add to your diet as a way of boosting your cancer prevention efforts.

- **Cloves** contain a chemical that protects against the age-related cell damage that can result in cancerous changes to your cells. This chemical (eugenol) is also found in **basil**, **cinnamon**, and **bay leaves**.
- Capsaicin is one of the things that make **hot peppers** so darn hot. But maybe eating hot peppers is worth it when you consider that capsaicin has been linked to a reduced rate of pancreatic cancer, one of the deadliest forms of cancer. In the laboratory, capsaicin has been shown to interfere with the growth of many different types of cancer cells including lung, breast and thyroid.
- **Garlic** has a long history as a herb used for to improve health and for good reason apparently. Modern science has demonstrated that garlic can influence cancerous cells by slowing down their growth. In the lab, garlic has demonstrated the ability to reduce the growth of bladder cancer cells and the spread of breast cancer cells. Garlic and the closely related onions and shallots have been linked to lower rates of gallbladder cancer. It's thought that chemicals in garlic interfere with the inflammation, cell division, and spread of cancerous cells.
- **Oregano** is a spice chalk full of antioxidants that has been used in traditional medicine for centuries. Modern science has established that this spice contains numerous chemicals capable of protecting healthy cells from the damage that can trigger cancerous changes.
- **Parsley** contains a plant chemical called apigenin. This chemical has been shown to have anti-cancer activity. Thankfully, for those of you who don't like parsley,

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apigenin is also found in **celery, thyme, celeriac, chamomile, onions, lemon balm,** and **oranges.**

- Other spices that contain chemicals capable of doing battle with precancerous and cancerous cells include **pepper, curry, thyme, and ginger** – all of which have been linked to lower rates of breast cancer. Black pepper has been shown in the lab to improve immune system function, one of the body's most important defenses against cancer. Recent research suggests that a chemical found in black pepper may reduce the risk of colon cancer.
- It's not surprising to see ginger on that list as that plant has played a role in traditional medicine for centuries. It's thought that this plant reduces inflammation, shortens the lifespan of cancer cells, and protect healthy cells from damage that could trigger a switch to cancerous cells.
- Other spices that have shown promise when it comes to preventing cancer include **turmeric, cardamom, cinnamon, and saffron.**

Medicinal plants

Plants are used in countries around the world to both prevent and treat cancer.

- **Black cumin** and **fenugreek** are two plants that have a long history of being used to treat cancer. Presumably, the qualities that help these plants combat cancer might also be helpful in preventing cancer in the first place. It's important to remember that medical plants can have both health benefits and also be toxic in certain doses and forms. Anyone who wants to give medical plants a try needs to be sure they know exactly what they're doing – otherwise, they are putting themselves at serious risk.
- **Barley grass extract** (BGE) is used for a variety of health reasons but may also offer some value when it comes to preventing cancerous cells from progressing to a tumor. For example, there is some evidence that BGE can trigger the death of breast and prostate cancer cells. It's believed that the phytonutrients in barley are what explain the anti-cancer action of this plant

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- **Bitter melon** is a medicinal plant from Asia. This plant has been identified as having the potential to reduce the rates of head and neck cancer. It is thought that this plant's anti-cancer activity is related both to boosting the immune system and to triggering the death of cancer cells.
- **Chaga mushrooms** are a type of fungus that has played a role in traditional medicine for centuries. These fungi grow on birch and other hardwood trees. In the lab, scientists have demonstrated that chaga contains naturally occurring chemicals that can reduce the rate of cancer cell division and trigger early death in breast and colon cancer cells.
- **Goji berries**, come from an Asian plant and are used for medical purposes in traditional Chinese medicine. This plant is being investigated for its cancer prevention and treatment abilities. In one study, extract from Goji berries inhibited the growth of breast cancer cells.
- **Korean red ginseng** is also being investigated for its potential to reduce the risk of cancer. In the laboratory, chemicals derived from KSG have shown the ability to interfere with the growth of malignant melanoma cells.

Nuts and seeds

- **Brazil nuts** are a source of anti-oxidants which may offer some protection against cancer by protecting healthy cells from being converted into cancerous ones. Not to be outdone, laboratory work has identified **hazelnuts** as having the potential to help prevent colon cancer. If seeds are more your thing, you'll be glad to hear that both sunflower seeds and pumpkin seeds have been associated with a lower risk of certain types of cancer, including breast cancer.
- **Chia seeds** have been a part of the diet for thousands of years in certain parts of the world. Like so many of the foods that our ancestors used to eat, chia contains phytochemicals which potentially can help keep cells healthy. As a source of antioxidant and fiber, it's not much of a surprise that chia is considered by some to help prevent cancer, as well as heart disease, and diabetes.

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- **Flaxseed** contains antioxidants, fiber, and healthy fats. It also has some anti-inflammatory benefits. Taken together, flax seed is a good candidate as a functional food – in other words, a food that has health benefits. In the lab, it's been shown that flax seed may be linked to lower rates of breast cancer and may help stop breast cancer cells from dividing rapidly.
- **Peanuts:** Although peanuts are not really nuts (they're actually a type of legume), it makes sense to include them in this food group. And, just as for tree nuts, eating peanuts reduces the risk of stomach cancer.
- **Tree nuts** (e.g., walnuts, almonds, pecans): Eating trees nuts has been shown to reduce the risk of a certain type of stomach cancer. And that's not all; nut consumption is also linked to lower rates of lung, uterine, colon, and pancreatic cancer. How can that all be explained? Again, the fiber and the different nutrients found in nuts help keep cancerous cells from growing out of control. One way the chemicals in nuts help prevent cancer is by triggering the death of cancer cells.
- **Sesame seeds** contain a chemical (sesamin) that has been demonstrated to have anti-cancer effects. Like many other phytonutrients, sesamin appears to encourage the death of cancer cells. This useful chemical also interferes with a blood supply getting to cancer cells and protects healthy cells from damage.
- **Walnuts** contain plant chemicals that may offer some protection against cancer. In the lab, proteins from walnuts have shown the ability to impede the growth of skin, prostate, and blood cancer cells.

Other foods linked to lower rates of cancer

- **Chlorella** is a type of algae with a long history of being included in the diet of humans. Some studies have identified Chlorella has having antioxidant abilities which may offer some protection against cancer.
- **Coffee** may also offer some protection against cancer cells. Scientists in the field have reported that cancer can hasten the death of stomach cancer cells. Coffee has also been linked to a reduced risk of mouth, throat, liver, colon, prostate, and

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endometrial cancer as well as melanoma. Keep in mind that some studies have found a link between coffee and increased risk of lung cancer (although it's been suggested that this is because lots of smokers like to drink coffee).

- **Dietary fiber** is fermented in the bottom part of your intestines. And the results of the fermentation are fatty acids that are thought to help trigger early death in cancer cells. Thankfully fiber can be found in foods that also offer other benefits – including phytochemicals that combat cancerous cells. Some of the foods with the highest fiber count include raspberries, pears, celery and kidney beans. Pearl barley, brown rice, and oatmeal are just some of the grain that also contain considerable amounts of fiber.
- **Legumes** including dry beans, chickpeas, lentils, and fresh peas have been linked to lower rates of cancer. Again, the theory is that these plants contain nutrients that work their magic by preventing cell damage and encouraging the death of abnormal (e.g., cancerous) cells) That could help explain why prostate cancer rates are lower in those who eat more legumes. Legumes are also one of the plant groups that have also been associated with reduced rates of head and neck cancer.
- **Honey:** The use of honey for medicinal reasons goes far back, and there's are good reasons for that. When it comes to cancer prevention, honey has the potential to improve the immune system (including those cells responsible for finding cancerous cells and destroying) and also offers antioxidant and anti-inflammatory functions. **Manuka honey** specifically has been identified as possibly having the potential to reduce the risk of colon cancer. In a similar vein, **propolis** (also known as bee glue – a mix of bee wax, bee saliva and tree sap) has been shown in the lab to interfere with the growth of breast and colon cancer cells.
- **Olive oil** contains chemicals can that help combat inflammation. That's very useful when it comes to cancer prevention because inflammation is thought to help cancer cells grow and spread. Some of the naturally occurring substances in olive oil are thought to help delay aging and certain disease states – including cancer.
- **Omega 3 fatty acids** are a type of fat found in certain fish and shellfish as well as walnuts and flaxseed. In some studies, omega-3 fats have been linked to lower

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rates of cancer, including head and neck cancer. Omega-3 fats that come from fish are associated with lower rates of colon cancer.

- **Seaweed** has been a food source for humans for thousands of years. It contains a rich variety of phytonutrients that have been shown to have health benefits – including anti-tumor activity.
- **Soya beans** may have something to offer cancer prevention efforts as well. This food has been linked to lower rates of breast, colon and prostate cancer.
- **Spirulina** is a type of algae that is sometimes referred to as a superfood due to its concentration of nutrients and other active ingredients. It's thought to have the potential to do battle help against cancer, perhaps through its anti-oxidant (cell-protecting) functions.
- **Tea** has played an important medical role for centuries. Green tea has been shown to reduce the risk of certain types of cancer, including gallbladder, esophageal and prostate cancer. In non-smoking women, black tea may reduce the risk of bladder cancer. In both cases, it is thought that the nutrients found in tea plants are responsible for the reduced rates of cancer.

Specific diets

Not only do certain foods favored by our ancestors (e.g., fresh fruits and vegetables) potentially offer some protection against cancer, so do specific diets that include these foods. Scientists have been paying particular attention to a few diets that are associated with a longer lifespan. These diets include the following:

1. Mediterranean Diet

The Mediterranean diet is the traditional diet eaten by people living in countries such as Italy and Greece. Following the Mediterranean diet means eating ample amounts of fish, olive oil, unrefined grains (like cornmeal and whole oats), herbs (such as parsley and oregano), fruits and vegetables. This diet also includes drinking moderate amounts of red wine. (The operative word being moderate as excessive alcohol is associated with an

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increased risk of cancer). Those following a Mediterranean diet only eat small amounts of red meat. Think of filling your plate with whole wheat pasta, chickpeas sautéed with oregano, garlic, and sun-dried tomatoes, adding a side of steamed broccoli dressed with a handful of roasted hazelnuts – and you’re looking at an example of the Mediterranean diet.

And when it comes to keeping you healthy, the Mediterranean diet has been linked to lower rates of certain cancers, including breast and prostate.

2. The Nordic Diet

The traditional **Nordic diet** includes generous amounts of dark (whole grain) rye bread, fish, and root vegetables. This diet has been linked to a reduced rate of colon cancer in women amongst other health benefits such as lower rates of type 2 diabetes and heart disease.

3. The Prudent Diet

You can think of the **Prudent Diet** as much closer to the diet our ancestors used to eat than the typical western diet. The prudent diet is similar to the Nordic and Mediterranean diets - and it’s called prudent because it includes all those recommendations that have been made time and time again: cut out the junk, and eat your fruits, veggies and other unprocessed foods like fish, whole grain bread, and dairy foods. In return, there is evidence that the risk of certain types of cancer, including breast and lung, is reduced in those people who eat “prudently.”

4. The Okinawa Diet

The **Okinawa diet** originates in a southern part of Japan. It’s a diet that has been associated with several health benefits including reduced heart disease and lower rates of certain types of cancer. If you want to give this type of diet a shot, you’ll need to keep away from saturated fat, full-fat dairy products, sugar, salt and refined (white) grains. Instead, your plate should include sizeable servings of green leafy vegetables, sweet potatoes, soya-

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based foods (like tofu), fish and maybe some fruit for dessert. The diet also includes functional foods like turmeric and seaweed.

5. The Western Diet

The **Western diet** really refers to a diet full of processed grain, meat, and sugar. Think of a doughnut for breakfast, hamburger and fries for lunch, and pepperoni pizza (without any veggies) with pop for supper. It's a pretty popular diet in many countries, but it comes at a cost – including increased rates of cancer. Some of the cancers that have been associated with eating like this on a regular basis include breast cancer and colon cancer.

Foods associated with higher rates of cancer

The good news is that eating certain foods can reduce your risk of all sorts of cancers. The bad news is that eating certain foods – some of which are very popular – can increase your risk of cancer. But better to know what you're getting yourself into health wise when it comes to what you put on your plate than to unknowingly put yourself at higher risk of cancer by eating bacon every day.

So, healthy, whole foods, herbs, and medicinal plants aren't the only things from the past that are related to cancer prevention. It's also avoiding certain foods that have come along with the modern times that might help keep cancer at bay.

Red meat: Yes, unfortunately, it's true. Red and processed meats (think lunch meats and bacon) have been linked to higher rates of certain types of cancer – including colon cancer

Charred, barbequed and deep-fried meat: Cooking meat in any of those ways causes a chemical reaction that can make these foods less than healthy. That's why cooking meat this way is linked to an increased risk of colon, pancreatic and prostate cancers. Still want to include some meat in your diet – bake it instead.

Refined grains and sugars have been linked to certain types of cancer. In one study, people who ate more refined grain bread (think white bread) were at greater risk of

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developing bladder cancer. This risk got even worse if eating white bread was also accompanied by low intake of vegetables. In other words, vegies can help offset some of the risk associated with eating more refined grains. So, if you absolutely need to use white bread for your sandwich, take a page from olden times, and stack that bread with tomatoes, cucumbers, and baby spinach.

Putting it altogether - a day of eating for cancer prevention

There's a lot of foods to chose from when it comes to designing a diet with cancer prevention in mind. That means you can have a varied diet that offers ample health benefits – and maybe, just maybe, that'll be some compensation for giving up your breakfast sausage habit (or at least cutting down on that habit). Let's take a look at some options:

Breakfast: A handful of nuts and seeds stirred into oatmeal porridge, sweetened with honey, sprinkled with cinnamon and cardamom and accompanied by black coffee,

Snack: Fresh fruit salad – just remember not to add any sugar!

Lunch: Now would be a good time for a garden salad – complete with dark green lettuce, tomatoes, a slice or two of red onion, and an olive oil dressing. Combine that with a bowl full of turkey chili and a slice or two of whole grain bread, and you're good to go.

Snack: What about a homemade muffin, chock-a-block full of blueberries – accompanied by a cup of green tea?

Supper: Time to bring out the wild sockeye salmon (or the chicken breast), the potatoes mashed with olive oil instead of butter, and the Brussel sprouts lightly sautéed with garlic.

Snack: What's it going to be? A banana dipped in almond butter? Some kale chips from your local health food store? Or maybe even some popcorn sprinkled with black pepper and oregano.



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So, you see, its possible to return to the healthy foods that dominated the lives of our ancestors without having to give up taste and variety.

- Chapter Two -
Lifestyle Choices and Cancer
Prevention

A Healthy Body Weight

Healthy body weight was apparently easier to achieve in the old days. Without the conveniences associated with modern day life (cars, video games, and large screen televisions), it was much easier for people to keep their weight in the healthy range. That has some definite advantages when it comes to cancer prevention because being obese is not always a good thing when it comes to that disease. For example, obesity is linked to increased rates of bladder and kidney cancer, and multiple myeloma (a type of blood cell cancer). Further, being obese before the age of 40 has also been linked to an increased rate of breast cancer. Other cancers associated with obesity include liver cancer, brain cancer, thyroid, stomach, liver, esophageal, uterine and ovarian cancer.

Don't be discouraged. You don't have to drop all your excess weight overnight. Even losing a small amount of weight will have health benefits. In fact, taking a slow and steady approach to weight often makes it easier to keep the weight off for the long term. And that's a good thing because cancer prevention isn't a short-term project, you want to make it a permanent state of being.

If cutting back on food doesn't work for you, remember that dieting isn't the only way to lose pounds. You can go the route of increasing your physical activity – which brings us to another component of cancer prevention: upping our activity level so it much more along the lines of our ancestors who filled their days with physical work.

Exercise

Exercise as a way of keeping healthy is not a new idea and for evidence that it works, just look at cancer and heart disease rates back in the day when jobs were physical and being active throughout the day was typical, rather than the exception. The benefits of exercise include cancer prevention with certain types of cancer being linked to a more active lifestyle. For example, being active throughout life is linked to a lower rate of liver cancer.

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High levels of physical activity are thought to help reduce estrogen levels and thereby reduce the risk of breast cancer in post-menopausal women. In a more general way, being sedentary is bad for your health in many ways. A lack of physical activity is associated with heart disease and type 2 diabetes. It also not only increases the risk that you will develop cancer but also the risk that you will die from that cancer.

Clearly, following the lead of our ancestors who spent a lot less time sitting and a lot more time engaged in physical work has something to offer when it comes to cancer prevention. Of course, no one expects people to spend their days tilling crops and pumping the well. But it still makes sense to include modern day versions of those activities in your schedule. So, walk to work, go to the gym, chop wood at your cottage, and maybe even consider having “walk and talk” meetings instead of spending hours in a conference room.

The goal is to aim for 75 minutes of vigorous exercise a week (playing a fast-paced game of hockey; going for a run or even some heavy-duty carpentry can count as vigorous) or 150 minutes of moderate activity (a brisk walk through your neighborhood can count towards that goal – so too can gardening). It’s also a good idea to limit screen time – and to interrupt any screen time with some activity, even if it simply means doing some stretching during commercial breaks.

Alcohol

You may remember that a moderate amount of red wine is part of the Mediterranean diet, a diet that is not associated with increased rates of cancer. But the same can’t be said for high alcohol intake. Because drinking a lot of alcohol increases the rate of digestive (including stomach), liver, esophageal, colon, pancreatic, and breast cancer, cancer prevention includes keeping an eye on your alcohol intake. A recent recommendation is that men drink a maximum of 2 drinks/day, and women one drink/day – although there are some people who should drink much less or not at all for health reasons. (If alcohol doesn’t agree with you, but you’d like to acquire some of the benefits associated with

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drinking red wine, you can always substitute a tall glass of fresh purple grape juice – as this drink is also associated with a lower risk of certain types of cancer).

Stress Management

Stress management has become a vital skill in the day and age of an unrelenting rat race, financial stress, crowding, and traffic jams. Maybe we should take a page out of our ancestor's playbook and simplify things. Why does this have anything to do with cancer prevention? Well, the argument is that stress leads to overeating, excess alcohol use, and makes it harder to quit smoking – all habits associated with higher rates of cancer. So, by getting off the hamster wheel and doing whatever you need to do to keep your stress to a level that you can easily manage (without food, alcohol, or cigarettes), you might just be making it harder for cancer to show up and stick around.

Sleep

Sleep is important for maintaining health for several reasons – it keeps your immune system working, reduces inflammation, and helps regulate your weight. And that's why sleep gone wrong is associated with an increased risk of cancer. For example, shift work has been associated with increased rates of breast cancer. One theory is that by disturbing sleep, the body's hormones also get disturbed, increasing the risk that breast cells will become cancerous. Lack of sleep has also been linked to prostate and colon cancer. More indirectly, a lack of sleep can increase the risk of obesity and type 2 diabetes, two conditions that are linked to higher rates of cancer. Getting enough sleep also keeps our immune system in working order. This is relevant to cancer prevention because your immune system plays a role in detecting (and neutralizing) precancerous cells. Chronic inflammation, a process linked to increased rates of cancer, also goes up when we don't get enough sleep. Clearly, there are all sorts of very good reasons for making time to get enough sleep.

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As a source of vitamin D, **the sun** has a role to play in maintaining good health. But too much of a good thing can be a very bad thing. Our ancestors knew what they were doing when they covered up when the sun was at its strongest. That makes good sense in this day and age given that connection between sun exposure and skin cancer.

The saying “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” has been with us for a long time. It’s what drove many of the things our ancestors did – motivating them to prepare for long hard winters by storing food or locating their homes far away from local flood plains. When it comes to cancer, modern times has provided the opportunity to add **screening** to our “ounce of prevention” options. For example, screening for prostate, colon, breast, and colon cancer is now possible. Of course, screening doesn’t prevent cancer in the first place, but it does allow for an early diagnosis which just might prevent the cancer from becoming more advanced and harder to treat.

Smoking

Smoking as a risk factor for cancer is worth repeating. Lung cancer is perhaps the best-known result of cigarette smoking, but stomach cancer is also increased in smokers. And you don’t even have to be the one smoking – second-hand smoke brings its own share of problems. Chewing tobacco is best avoided if you want to prevent head and neck cancers.

Gum and Tooth Decay

Avoiding gum and tooth decay makes good sense for the sake of your mouth alone. But it seems that gum disease is a problem for other reasons, including its impact on cancer. One study found that gum disease is linked to a greater risk of dying in cancer patients. Lung, kidney, and blood cancer have also been linked to gum disease. It may be that the inflammation in diseased gums changes body chemistry and promotes the development of cancerous cells. Whatever the explanation, putting time and energy into keeping your teeth and gums shipshape is apparently a very good use of time.



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- Chapter Three -
Your Environment and Cancer
Prevention:

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Environmental factors play an important role in a significant percentage of cancers. That's reason enough to pay attention to where and how you live.

Heavy metals

Heavy metals include lead, boron, cadmium and a variety of other minerals not meant for eating. However, these metals get into the food system via contamination of soil and crops. That's why all you gardeners out there need to give some thought to where you're growing your fruits and vegetables. Some urban gardening plots result in produce that is contaminated with heavy metals that have significant, and dangerous, side effects. For example, chromium is a heavy metal that is linked to higher rates of cancer. Nickel and cadmium are other heavy metals that can have cancer-causing effects. High levels of lead have been associated with increased risk of stomach cancer with mercury being linked to increased liver cancer. Both arsenic and lead have been linked to increased rates of skin cancer. The bottom line is this: eating heavy metals via your food can result in significant health consequences and is best avoided if at all possible.

Our ancestors had an advantage when it came to pollution – as it simply wasn't so widespread. Still, there are things you can do to prevent your exposure to modern day pollution like heavy metals – and one of those things is growing your food in clean soil. For those of you gardening at home, you may want to send your soil to a local lab for heavy metal testing. That way you'll know that you're not ruining all the benefits of fruits and vegetables for cancer prevention by growing them in contaminated soil.

Air pollution

Air pollution isn't pleasant at the best of times but what's worse is that traffic-related air pollution (TRAP) can increase the risk of cancer, particularly lung, breast, and prostate cancer. Although a car-free community would help reduce that kind of pollution, those types of places are few and far between. Instead, what you can do it make sure that you're living as far as possible from major roadways. Likewise, take your walk/jog/bike breaks

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away from the hustle and bustle of the local traffic jams. There is also some evidence that living near certain types of factories can increase cancer risk. For example, living near pesticide factories has been linked to increased rates of breast cancer. Factories specializing in metal production have been linked to increased risk of certain cancers in children. We may not have the same access to pristine, undisturbed landscapes that our ancestors did, but if cancer prevention is your goal, living near industrial plants might be worth avoiding.

Manufactured pesticides

Manufactured pesticides are a modern-day invention which, unfortunately, are sometimes accompanied by increase risk of cancer. That's why it's important to ensure that your food isn't contaminated by these chemicals – chemicals that your ancestors didn't have to contend with. Sometimes the pesticides are found on fruit and vegetables, but other times they are found in the fish you catch. You can reduce your pesticide exposure by opting for organic foods – as for fishing; you'll need to keep an eye on any alerts related to whether the fish you catch is safe for consumption. What you don't want to do is start eating more fish as part of your cancer prevention plan only to discover that the fish on your plate is riddled with chemicals that are known to cause cancer.

Household products

Household products you can buy at your local grocery store have been approved for consumer use. But for those of you who want to steer clear of anything that involves potentially toxic chemicals you might want to consider using natural cleaners instead of whatever leading brands are on sale this week. Formaldehyde is one chemical found in certain household products and has been described as a “known carcinogen.” To avoid exposure to that chemical, using something as simple as vinegar and water to clean your home is an option worth considering. Personal care products can also contain formaldehyde – providing a rationale for making your own soaps, shampoos, and

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deodorants out of natural products. If that takes too much time, you can also look for fragrance-free, formaldehyde-free natural cleaning products.

Radon

After smoking, radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer. Radon is a naturally occurring gas that can leak into homes, undetected. Fortunately, radon detection systems are now available to the consumers. Now, no one is arguing that radon detection was practiced by our ancestors. But what can be said is that our forefathers and mothers did pay attention to their environment before building a home or establishing a village. So, floodplains were out, and areas with fertile soils were in. Similarly, it makes sense in modern times, to ensure our shelter is keeping use secure and healthy and not exposing us to a cancer-causing chemical like radon. And remember, it's not only your home that should be checked. Your workplace can also be a site of radon exposure.

Suspected but not proven

There are is no shortage of possible risks factors for cancer – but science hasn't yet determined whether they are definite causes for concern or not. For example, some of the possible environmental risk factors including fluoridated water, electromagnetic radiation (e.g., from power lines), chemicals found in some hair care and make-up products, and BPA, a chemical used in some plastic containers. Although not proven to increase the risk of cancer, if you can live without any of these, why not. (Of course, it's hard to live without power lines but you can choose to avoid living right next to a power plant).

Conclusion

It's not possible to entirely eliminate the risk of developing a health condition like cancer. But it is possible to make food and lifestyle choices that might very well stack the odds in your favor when it comes to cancer prevention. And why leave any stone unturned when it comes to avoiding the cancer “epidemic” sweeping modern day society?

Your diet alone opens the door to hundreds of tweaks that allow you do your part for cancer prevention. Maybe it's eating a little less bacon or adding a handful of baby spinach to your salad. If you're not quite ready to tweak your diet, making sure you're getting enough sleep and physical activity, as many of our ancestors did, is another investment in a healthier, and hopefully cancer free, life. So you might decide to turn the television off 30 minutes earlier than usual or join the local walking group. The list of healthy lifestyle changes goes on and on. What that means is that if you just can't imagine ever eating a bowl full of chickpeas (one of the many legumes associated with a lower risk of cancer), there are still hundreds of other healthy choices you can as part of a “cancer prevention” lifestyle.

Many of the foods and lifestyle choices linked to lower rates of cancer are also linked to lower rates of heart disease, stroke, and type 2 diabetes. In other words, a single change may give you a lot of bang for your buck. And that should be reason enough to put a serving of broccoli (or sweet potato, or Brussel sprouts) on your plate later today, followed by an after supper walk.

Cancer is giving modern men and women a run for their money. But there is no reason for anyone just to sit and wait for the disease to show up unannounced one day. Instead, time to rally your body's defenses, by eating and living in a way that many of our ancestors did. Lots of fruits and vegetables, lots of sleep and activity, and very little chemicals and pollution. That combination has a lot to offer when it comes to cancer prevention. Now it's your turn to join your ancestors in their healthy lifestyle – one day at a time and as quickly or as slowly as you can muster. Sure, it will take some time and effort, but you're worth it! If that's not motivation enough, keeping yourself healthy (including cancer-free)



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is one way to keep yourself from being dependent on the modern medical system. Now, that type of independence is worth its weight in gold.