



Eating to *Fight Your Tumor*

If you are like many of us, your eating habits prior to this brain tumor experience probably weren't always "healthful." On occasion, you may have promised yourself to make changes. Did you?

This article offers easy, realistic tips for making a transition toward healthful eating. The suggestions benefit anyone interested in giving their body the nutrients that help fight disease. We're not talking about making dramatic dietary changes; rather, these are suggestions that can take you through treatment and beyond.

Don't attempt to follow all the tips at once – that's a recipe for failure. Begin with the item that's easiest for you or your family. A few weeks later, choose another, and add it to your new healthful eating plan. Repeat the cycle, continually adding one more tip until you've moved into a healthier eating mode.

TIP # 1: REMOVE WHITE FOOD FROM YOUR DIET

White foods tend to be processed foods, low in nutrients and high in sugar. White bread is probably the easiest item in your diet to immediately identify and eliminate. But don't take all bread from your diet – grains can be an important source of fiber, selenium, and vitamins B and E. Try asking each member of your family to select new bread for the dinner table. Anyone for the crunch of oats? The nutty flavor of whole or cracked wheat? Bring the loaf home to slice or pull apart at the table for the freshest taste.

EATING TO FIGHT YOUR TUMOR

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Likewise, avoid white rice – milling the rice, to make it white, removes the healthy outer hull of the grain. Look for brown, long grain, and wild rice varieties which have a nuttier flavor and slight crunch to them. Replace white refined sugar with healthier alternatives. Molasses is great in beans, barbecue sauce, zucchini or carrot breads and contains iron, calcium, potassium, and vitamin B6. Barley malt syrup, less sweet tasting than the molasses, contains trace amounts of B vitamins and several minerals.

TIP # 2: SELECT VEGETABLES AND FRUIT WITH VIVID COLORS

If you think veggies and fruits don't come with nutritional labels, think again: Their nutrients actually appear in blazing color! The more intense the color, the higher the nutritional content. Choose bold green varieties of lettuce – the darker, the better. If you insist iceberg lettuce is “salad,” add red leaf lettuce, dark romaine, or a handful of spinach. Although the main nutrient in iceberg lettuce is water, adding darker varieties brings vitamins A and C, calcium, iron and copper to your salad. Peas tossed with a pinch of mustard, edamame sprinkled with a bit of red pepper, and spinach sautéed in fresh garlic and olive oil are flavorful suggestions for adding vitamins B and C, iron, protein and fiber to your diet. And don't shy away from canned vegetables, especially if they make your life easier right now. While you do pick up some extra salt, the nutrients stay with the product longer than fresh produce lost at the back of your refrigerator. Frozen vegetables are also a healthy alternative.

Try the “3-colors-a-day” trick as an easy way of ensuring fruits and vegetables make their way into your menus. For example, blueberries (1) on your breakfast cereal, dark green leafy lettuce (2) on your cracked wheat and turkey luncheon sandwich, and a dinner chicken salad with tangerine slices (3) creates a “3-colors-a-day” menu of blue, green and orange. How many colors did you eat today?

TIP # 3: BECOME AWARE OF PHYTOCHEMICALS

“Phyto” means plant. Phytochemicals are nutrients derived from plants, and they are healthy buzzwords in nutrition and cancer research. These are not vitamins or minerals, and they have no calories. Although scientists are still learning about these fascinating substances, phytochemicals appear to stimulate the immune system, inhibit enzymes that may contribute to cancer growth, act as free radical scavengers, exhibit antibacterial and antiviral activity, and in general, help your body fight cancer. Don't head for the vitamin store, though; the same substances that may be healthful in nature may be

PHYTOCHEMICALS: THE NEXT FRONTIER

Phytochemical Family	Major Food Sources
Diallyl Sulfides	Onions, garlic, leeks, chives
Carotenoids	Carrots, cooked tomatoes, leafy greens, sweet potatoes, apricots
Flavonoids	Tea, coffee, citrus fruits
Indoles	Cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cabbage, kale, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts)
Isoflavones	Soybeans (tofu, soy milk)
Isothiocyanates	Cruciferous vegetables
Phenolic Acids	Berries, citrus fruits, apples, whole grains, nuts
Polyphenols	Green tea, grapes
Saponins	Beans and other legumes
Terpenes	Cherries, citrus fruit peel, rosemary

Diagram courtesy of the American Institute for Cancer Research, www.aicr.org.

harmful in supplement form. While research in this area continues, choose the phytochemicals found in fresh fruits, vegetables, select grains, herbs and spices. Read more at the Ohio University web site, <http://ohioline.osu.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5050.html> or the UC Berkeley Wellness letter at <http://www.wellnessletter.com/html/wl/2003/wlFeatured1003.html>.

TIP # 4: HYDRATE, HYDRATE, HYDRATE

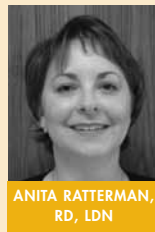
Nutritionists aren't kidding when they tell us our bodies need at least 8 glasses of fluid a day. Drink less, and your kidneys will not filter out all the toxins they collect daily from your body. During chemotherapy, additional fluids are needed to replace fluid lost through treatment side effects. The weight gain and puffiness caused by steroids may tempt you to skimp on your water. Don't – avoiding water now will only worsen the side effects. If you are a coffee or caffeinated tea drinker, you'll need one to two cups of water to offset every cup of coffee you drink. While water is the healthiest and most convenient fluid, fresh fruit and vegetable juices carry a bonus of phytochemicals and vitamins.

Monitoring your hydration is easy: When your urine is clear, you are well hydrated. If your urine is dark yellow, you need to drink more.

Hint. If you are a green tea drinker, fresh brew it. Let your boiling water cool slightly before pouring over the leaves, or use the water just before it boils. (Boiling water burns and bruises the tea leaves, making the tea bitter.) Drink within 45 minutes of brewing for maximum phytonutrient benefit.

TIP # 5: EAT HEALTHY FAT

Here's the science: We've all heard that the Omega-6 fats contained in hydrogenated and trans fat (the substances that turn fat into solids) are detrimental. But did you know there are healthy fats that may increase the activity of the immune system's natural killer cells? Flaxseed is the richest plant source of these healthy Omega-3



We thank Anita Ratterman, RD, LDN, Northwest Community Hospital, Arlington Heights, Illinois, for sharing these tips with us.

fats. It is also a remarkable source of dietary lignans, phytoestrogens containing antioxidant and antiangiogenic properties. Add 1-2 tablespoons of freshly-ground flax seeds or ground flaxmeal a day. Mix it into your morning breakfast cereal, put it in the blender with your fruit drink, or sprinkle it on salad. Flaxseed has a nutty flavor. Oily fish, such as lake trout, herring and sardines, canola, and walnut oil are all excellent sources of Omega-3 fats. The goal is to increase your intake of healthy fats, and decrease those solid fats.

TIP # 6: FOLLOW THE 80/20 RULE

This is the tip with the built-in reward. No one can eat healthy all of the time; allow yourself a fudge factor. If you make healthy selections 80% of the time, you can allow yourself to make unhealthy choices 20% of the time. Knowing you have that bit of latitude can keep you making healthier choices long after treatment ends.

TIP # 7: CONSULT A LICENSED, REGISTERED DIETITIAN

Interested in learning more? Have a particular nutritional goal you are trying to meet or a medical challenge for which you need help? Consider a personal consultation with a registered dietitian. Call the American Dietetic Association at 800-877-1600 for the names of licensed dietitians in your area. If you are a person with a brain tumor, ask for a dietitian with special training in oncology (cancer care). Your physician may work with a dietitian, or there may be one available in the cancer program at your hospital.