Diet and Nutrition Advice for Ovarian Cancer Patients

by KRYSTINA OSTERMEYER

Ovarian Cancer Diet: Food for Ovarian Cancer Patients

It is no secret that proper nutrition is important for everyone – whether you are healthy with no health conditions, have asthma, have coronary artery disease, have diabetes, or have cancer.

Cynthia A. Thomson of Health Promotion Sciences at the Canyon Ranch Center for Prevention and Health Promotion at the University of Arizona in Tuscon told *Reuters,* “One in two U.S. adults will be diagnosed with some form of cancer in their lifetime and eating healthy is important in regards to how we come through this experience.”

However, it is well-established that proper nutrition is essential if you have cancer.

Treatment Can Affect Your Body's Ability to Utilize Nutrients

In fact, according to the National Cancer Institute, “good nutrition is important for good health. Eating the right kinds of foods before, during, and after cancer treatment can help the patient feel better and stay stronger… When the body does not get or cannot absorb the nutrients needed for health, it causes a condition called malnutrition or malnourishment.”

Cancer and cancer treatments, such as chemotherapy and radiation therapy, can affect the body’s ability to utilize nutrients, as well as your ability effectively take in nutrition.

For example, your chosen treatments may have side effects that make it difficult to eat, such as mouth sores, nausea and vomiting, and diarrhea. For this reason, it is important to take in the proper nutrition – and sometimes, getting help from a registered dietitian is necessary.

Why You Should Include Fruits and Vegetables

A research study published in *Journal of the American Dietetic Association* indicated that women who ate a healthier diet in the years before an ovarian cancer diagnosis would have a longer life expectancy than those women who did not eat a healthy diet.

Why?

Ovarian cancer patients often have a poor life expectancy because it is typically not diagnosed until later stages of cancer.

The study was able to pinpoint that those women who ate a “healthy” diet had longer, healthier lives post-diagnosis and it was even able to pinpoint which foods were the most beneficial.

For example, yellow and cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, seemed to be the most beneficial.

Eat Your Yellow Vegetables

Researcher Therese Dolecek, PhD, a professor of epidemiology and investigator at the Institute for Health Research and Policy, University of Illinois at Chicago's School of Public Health, states, "At five years, 75 percent of the women who ate less than one serving a week of yellow vegetables were alive, compared to about 82 percent of those who had three or more servings of yellow vegetables a week."

Comparatively, those who ate a diet high in red meat and milk were more likely to have a lower life expectancy.

Those who had a diet high in red mean had a threefold risk of dying compared to those who did not have a diet high in red meat, while those who drank a lot of milk were twice as likely as milk teetotalers to die during the study period.

Researchers could not pinpoint why a diet high in fruits and vegetables increased life expectancy, although they had these two theories:

1. A stronger immune system
2. Improved overall health status

What does this mean for you, if you already have ovarian cancer?

Well, you may already have ovarian cancer, but that doesn't mean that you can't incorporate these healthy and delicious foods now! Keep reading for some ideas of specific foods that you should include in your ovarian cancer diet – and remember, incorporating fruits and vegetables is important!

Next page: Your new grocery shopping list, food for ovarian cancer tips, and more ovarian cancer diet advice.

Grocery Shopping for Those With Ovarian Cancer

Your best friends when you have ovarian cancer are fruits and vegetables. That doesn't mean you won't eat anything else in your diet, but it does mean you will increase your consumption of them. Fruits and vegetables are packed full of medicinal compounds that have the ability to restore health.

Consider loading some of the following into your trolley:

- **Carrots –** Grab a 10-pound bag of carrots, as they are one of the best veggies you can eat if you have ovarian cancer. Carrots, sweet potatoes and orange and red peppers all contain carotenoids, which are antioxidants that protect against cell damage. If you're juicing, one pound of carrots is needed to make one cup of carrot juice.
- **Berries –** Raspberries, blueberries and cranberries are all considered superfoods that protect against cancer and may even help combat certain types of cancer. Cranberries are especially good for women with ovarian cancer – studies have shown that a compound in cranberries makes cancer cells more sensitive to chemotherapy. Interestingly, raspberry tea has been used for decades for women with PMS or other menstrual troubles. You could even grow some of these berries in your garden.
- **Greens –** You'll need plenty of greens like broccoli, kale, spinach and cabbage. They're packed full of antioxidants called flavonoids as well as vitamin B and folate. Just remember that if you're juicing they can easily get stuck in the juicer and you may need to push them through with a carrot or celery stick.
- **Tomatoes –** Studies have shown that lycopene, which is found in tomatoes, lowers the risk of several cancers, and they're fantastic for juicing!
- **Lemons –** Lemons are full of vitamin C, which you probably know boosts the immune system. But did you know vitamin C can also help protect you from free radicals? Lemons are also full of limonoids, compounds that one study has shown to inhibit the growth of ovarian cancer cells.

- **Ginger –** Ginger has long been used for centuries for its medicinal properties, and recent research has shown that ginger powder kills any ovarian cancer cells it comes in contact with. While further research is needed for scientists to fully understand the reaction, it certainly can't hurt to include ginger in your diet. Ginger is also great for nausea.

You can use all of these foods in your next healthy salad for a delicious and healing meal.

More Foods to Add to Your Ovarian Cancer Diet

The above foods are excellent because not only are they fruits and vegetables, but much of them are yellow and cruciferous, as was identified in the research study as being the most beneficial. MD Anderson noted that the foods below are also beneficial for preventing cancers unique to women.

- **Coffee** – Women who consume coffee are 25 percent less likely to develop uterine coffee, as well as other types of female-specific cancers. Why? Coffee contains compounds that alter the way the body uses hormones such as estrogen and insulin.
- **Garlic** – Garlic contains manganese, vitamins B6 and C, and selenium, which are thought to fight off various types of cancers.
- **Grapes** – Grapes contain resveratrol, which can block the formation of different types of cancers. Red and purple grapes contain more resveratrol than green grapes, as do the skins of the grapes.
- **Onions** – Onions contain quercetin, which is known to fight inflammation in the body.

Incorporating a diet with all of the above foods could fight ovarian cancer, from the inside-out.