

# Nutrition & Wellness

Guidance for Breast Cancer Survivors



**Lifespan Cancer Institute**

Rhode Island Hospital / Hasbro Children's Hospital  
The Miriam Hospital • Newport Hospital

*Delivering health with care.®*





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# A Healthy Way to Eat

- 1** A plant-based diet, such as the traditional Mediterranean diet, has long been associated with a wide range of health benefits.
- 2** A primarily plant-based diet includes vegetables, fruits, and foods in the starch group (pasta, rice, potatoes, bread, legumes). Animal products (meat, poultry, seafood) are either excluded or included in small amounts.
- 3** Try to eat less animal protein. You do not need animal foods for protein; vegans, or people who do not eat any animal foods, can get enough protein in their diet. Our daily need for protein is not very high and when you eat more protein than you need in a day, the extra can be converted to fat and lead to higher body weight.
- 4** Limit your red meat/beef intake. Eating beef weekly, especially if it is cooked so it is charred, has been related to an increased risk of breast cancer.
- 5** Consume vegetables at both lunch and dinner. As often as possible, include vegetables that are dark in color and from the cruciferous family: broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, etc. Both dark and cruciferous vegetables contain compounds that are related to a lower risk of cancer. You should try to have two servings of vegetables at both your lunch and dinner. One serving equals  $\frac{1}{2}$  a cup of cooked vegetables (which is quite small) or 1 cup of salad greens.
- 6** Add extra virgin olive oil to your meals every day. Extra virgin olive oil is a plant food that provides a range of health benefits, including lowering blood glucose and blood pressure, and reducing oxidation and inflammation. Studies of women raised on diets that include extra virgin olive oil show that they are less likely to have breast cancer. Please read labels as there are no health benefits in oil that is just labeled "olive oil."
- 7** Limit or avoid vegetable seed oils such as corn, grapeseed, safflower, and soybean and foods that include these oils. The main type of fat in these oils will oxidize or break down in your body and this could contribute to diseases.
- 8** Eat three meals a day as often as you can and avoid snacking. Our bodies are more likely to store calories when we eat small amounts so snacking can lead to more weight gain compared to eating meals.
- 9** Try not to "drink" your calories. Some studies show that when we drink calories we are more likely to gain weight compared to eating calories. Calories we drink are soda, lemonade, any sweetened beverage, and juice. You can drink water or seltzer water, plain or flavored with lemon or lime wedges, fresh herbs. Unsweetened coffee, tea, and herbal teas, hot or iced, are also good choices.
- 10** Limit your eating out. The more you eat out, the more difficult it will be to control what you eat. If you do eat out, follow the guidelines of a plant-based, Mediterranean diet.
- 11** Limit your alcohol intake to no more than one drink per day, if you drink alcohol.



# What is Organic Food?

Conventional foods are grown with pesticides and chemicals, which are applied as part of the farming process. Organic food is grown by farmers that apply natural fertilizers, such as compost, and use beneficial insects or traps to help manage pests.

The idea of organic foods protecting against cancer is a controversial topic and there is not a clear explanation as to its protection against cancer. Some studies suggest that organic foods have a greater nutrient content and some studies state there is no difference.

## Then Why Would Someone Buy Organic?

Organic foods are better for the environment, as well as the health of laborers and communities. They also do not have synthetic additives or pesticides. Organic foods are typically more expensive compared to conventionally grown foods. The best foods to buy organic are ones where you eat the outside or skin of the food like apples, berries, lettuce, potatoes, etc.

## What is the Deal on Artificial Sweeteners?

Artificial sweeteners are created substances used to sweeten foods and beverages instead of table sugar or sucrose. Artificial sweeteners include saccharin, aspartame, acesulfame potassium, sucralose, neotame, and cyclamate. The studies done on these sweeteners are inconclusive. To be safe, it is recommended to sweeten your foods with natural substances, such as fruit, and limit your intake of processed foods, sodas, and sugar/artificially sweetened beverages.





# Maintaining a Healthy Weight is the Goal.

Healthy Food Choices and Year-Round Physical Activity are the Keys!

Strive to achieve a body weight that is healthy for you and one you can maintain forever. Following a plant-based diet, avoiding added sugar in food and beverages, and monitoring portion size is a great way to start. Your diet does not need to be perfect every day; making small, healthy changes gradually will help you achieve your goal.

## How to Read a Food Label

### New Label / What's Different?

Servings:  
larger,  
bolder type

New:  
added sugars

Change in  
some nutrients  
required

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
<b>Serving size</b>	<b>2/3 cup (55g)</b>
<b>Amount per serving</b>	
<b>Calories</b>	<b>230</b>
<b>% Daily Value*</b>	
<b>Total Fat</b> 6g	<b>10%</b>
Saturated Fat 1g	<b>5%</b>
Trans Fat 0g	
<b>Cholesterol</b> 0mg	<b>0%</b>
<b>Sodium</b> 100mg	<b>7%</b>
<b>Total Carbohydrate</b> 37g	<b>13%</b>
Dietary Fiber 4g	<b>14%</b>
Total Sugars 12g	
Includes 10g Added Sugars	<b>20%</b>
<b>Protein</b> 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	<b>10%</b>
Calcium 260mg	<b>20%</b>
Iron 8mg	<b>45%</b>
Potassium 240mg	<b>6%</b>

\* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

Serving sizes  
updated

Calories:  
larger type

Daily Values  
updated

Actual  
amounts  
declared

New  
footnote







# Calories

If you want to manage your weight (lose, gain, or maintain), this section of the food label is especially helpful. Remember – the calories refer to the listed serving size so make sure you know how much you are actually eating. The key is to balance how many calories you eat with how many calories your body uses.

Besides the nutrition label information, the list of ingredients can be very useful. The ingredients are listed by weight so the first ingredient would be the main ingredient. Use the ingredient list to look for foods you want to include or limit in your diet. Some items are contained in very small amounts so whether they are healthy or not healthy, they do not matter. As a general rule, food items in the ingredient list that are after the ingredient salt or spices would be present in very small amounts.

Develop and maintain a year-round physical activity program. An active lifestyle life has been linked numerous times to a decreased risk for breast cancer, so the more active you are, the better. Find an activity you enjoy. All types of activity are beneficial: walking, strength training, swimming, biking, even gardening and vigorous housecleaning. Start by being active for at least 30 minutes a day. Aim for 5 days a week. As your fitness level improves, increase your activity level to 60 minutes a day.







## Need Peace of Mind?

Life can be very stressful at times and it is important to have something in your life that helps you clear your mind and stay in the moment. Studies exploring the benefits of meditation and mindful-based intervention have found that individuals who meditate and practice yoga regularly have reduced stress, psychological distress, fatigue, and improved sleep quality.

Yoga and meditation reduce stress because they help you focus on your breathing and bring attention to your body. They promote relaxation by working on your central nervous system while increasing blood flow to each part of the body. If you are new to yoga, a gentle yoga class focusing on breathing and subtle movements of the body may be best for you. After you feel comfortable then try exploring the various types of yoga until you find the one you enjoy. If you are new to meditation, simply quieting your mind and focusing on your breathing for just a couple of minutes a day may be a good start. You can also find peace in doing activities you enjoy, for example, art, dancing, running, fishing, or simply taking a walk in nature.





# Lifestyle Changes for Achieving Wholeness and Wellness after Breast Cancer

The following suggestions have been put into the acronym “Help Myself.” I invite you to use some of them as a starting point to find your unique recovery path to wholeness and wellness after your diagnosis and to ask yourself, “What can I do to help myself?”

- H** Help someone or some cause (do something that adds meaning to your life)
- E** Exercise daily doing something you love to do or that makes you feel good
- L** Learn to enjoy new whole foods (not processed) and new recipes
- P** Plant a garden to increase your intake of plants plus exercise
  
- M** Meditate or learn another form of stress management
- Y** Yield gently to the changes in life. Many can open doors to new opportunities
- S** Size down the portions of most foods
- E** Enjoy water and unsweetened tea
- L** Lose weight (if needed) gradually
- F** Find a registered dietitian to advise you into recovery

*By: Diana Dyer, MS, RD a cancer survivor, registered dietitian, organic garlic farmer, and the author of "A Dietitian's Cancer Story: Information & Inspiration for Recovery & Healing from a 3-time Cancer Survivor."*



# Recommended Resources

## Websites

[www.airc.org](http://www.airc.org) - American Institute for Cancer Research

[www.eatright.org](http://www.eatright.org) - American Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics

[www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) - The American Cancer Society

**Nutrition and Physical Activity During and After Cancer Treatment: Answers to Common Questions** - Nutrition and Physical Activity During and After Cancer Treatment

## Books

**A Dietitian's Cancer Story: Information for Recovery and Healing** - Diana Dyer, MS, RD Swan Press, Ann Arbor, MI, 2005. Also available in Spanish - Historia de Cancer de una Dietista, Swan Press

**Food for Thought: Healing to Savor** - Sheila Kealey, Vicky Newman, and Susan Faerber, Moores UC - San Diego Cancer Center, 2012.

**The Cancer Lifeline Cookbook - Good Nutrition, Recipes, and Resources to Optimize the Lives of People Living with Cancer** - Kimberly Mathai, RD and Ginny Smith, Sasquatch Books, Seattle, WA, 2004.

**The Pink Ribbon Diet: A Revolutionary New Weight Loss Plan to Lower Your Breast Cancer Risk** - Mary Flynn and Nancy Verde. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo, 2010.

**The Complete Lymphedema Management & Nutrition Guide** - Jean LaMantia , Ann DiMenna, et al. | September 20, 2019.

**Complete Intermittent Fasting: Practical Guidelines and Healthy Recipes to Lose Weight and Improve Wellness** - Jean LaMantia RD | Nov 24, 2020.

**The Cancer-Fighting Kitchen: Nourishing Big Flavor Recipes for Cancer Treatment and Recovery, Second Edition** - Rebecca Katz with Mat Edelson, February 14, 2017.

**Intuitive Eating - A Revolutionary Anti-Diet Approach, 4th Edition** - Evelyn Tribole, M.S., R.D. June 23, 2020.



# Community Programs and Resources

*Please note some programs may be temporarily discontinued or meeting virtually due to COVID restrictions.*

## **Gloria Gemma Breast Cancer Resource Foundation**

**Young Survivors Program** provides programs and support designed to address the unique needs of young women diagnosed with cancer, including fertility, careers, early menopause, and sexuality.

**Gloria's Angels Healthy Eating** provides in-treatment cancer patients and their families with four nutrient-dense, ready-to-eat meals per month for three months. It enables cancer patients to eat healthfully at times when they may feel too weak or sick to prepare nutritious meals. This service is not based on a patient's income.

**Metastatic Program** was designed by metastatic patients for metastatic patients to enhance the quality of life for patients/survivors and their families.

**Drop-in Support Groups** are offered at our center and through our Hope Bus and provide safe spaces to express feelings freely and without judgment.

**Hope Bus** is the backbone of the Gloria Gemma Breast Cancer Resource Foundation's community outreach program. It delivers services, and resources across Rhode Island, southeastern Massachusetts, and eastern Connecticut.

For more information, please visit [gloriagemma.org](http://gloriagemma.org) and select "**Programs**" or call **401-861-4376**







# Lifespan Cancer Institute Programs and Resources

**Please note some programs may be temporarily discontinued or meeting virtually due to COVID restrictions.**

The Lifespan Cancer Institute (LCI) at Rhode Island, The Miriam, Newport, and Hasbro Children’s hospitals provides the most current cancer diagnosis and treatment options. Our world-renowned physicians and specialists form multidisciplinary teams, both in the hospitals and at the Lifespan Ambulatory Care Centers in East Greenwich and Lincoln. Their collective level of knowledge and experience is unparalleled in the region.

Additional experts—including nurses, nurse navigators, pharmacists, social workers, and nutritionists—work with patients and their families to ensure complete care from diagnosis through recovery.

**The OWLS Clinic** OWLS – Oncology, Wellness, Lifestyle, and Survivorship – is a consultative survivorship clinic for cancer patients. The clinic helps patients diagnosed with cancer manage symptoms, maintain a healthy lifestyle, and improve quality of life during and after treatment.

**Nutrition Services** registered dietitians can help identify and meet your nutritional needs during and after treatment so that you receive the best and most complete care.

**Young Fight Strong** is a program is for women 45 years old and younger who are living with or have survived breast and or gynecological cancer. The program provides workshops, lectures, research opportunities, and group discussions on relevant topics including sexuality, exercise, decreasing the risk of cancer, and stress reduction.

**Peer-to-Peer Program** connects patients with a specially trained peer volunteer who has a similar diagnosis and treatment plan. Peer-to-peer visits are available for both patients and caregivers. Visits are conducted in-person and virtually and facilitated by a clinical social worker.

**Patient and Family Advisory Council at Rhode Island Hospital, The Miriam Hospital, and Newport Hospital** ensures the voices of patients and families are represented to enhance the entire experience across the Lifespan Cancer Institute affiliates. The Council is composed of patients and caregivers and is facilitated by LCI nurse navigators and clinical social workers.

**Genetic Testing and Counseling** support patients who have an inherited type of cancer.

**Outpatient Cancer Rehabilitation** specifically addresses cancer-related side effects including therapy for lymphedema.

For more information, please visit [cancer.lifespan.org](http://cancer.lifespan.org) and select “**Support and Rehabilitation**” or call **1-844-222-2881**

To learn more, visit [cancer.lifespan.org](http://cancer.lifespan.org)

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Lifespan now uses LifeChart, an electronic health record system that gives you access to your own medical information and enables private communication with your physicians. Visit [Lifespan.org/MyLifespan](http://Lifespan.org/MyLifespan).

Learn more about Lifespan's clinical trials.

Go to [lifespan.org/clinical-trials](http://lifespan.org/clinical-trials) for information.

**Extraordinary care**  
to bring your life back to ordinary



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