

Whole, plant-based foods can help prevent breast cancer

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More women die of breast cancer in the U.S. than any other cancer besides lung cancer.

More than 45,000 new cases of breast cancer have been diagnosed since the beginning of 2014. About 12 percent of American women will develop breast cancer, and some men will as well.

While it seems that we have no control over the disease, diet can help prevent breast cancer, and it can even affect the prognosis of individuals under treatment.

For example, eat primarily whole, plant-based foods: vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans and nuts. The Adventist Health Study-2, which continues to follow more than 96,000 Seventh-day Adventists in the U.S. and Canada, has already found that women who follow a whole foods, plant-based diet are less likely to be diagnosed with breast cancer, as well as uterine, ovarian and other genital cancers.

In addition, the Million Women Study in the United Kingdom found that there was a 12 percent increased risk of breast cancer for every 10 grams of alcohol consumed daily. A 5-ounce glass of wine, or 1.5 ounce of 80-proof liquor, contains about 14 grams of alcohol, so even one drink a day increases the risk of breast cancer.

If you already have breast cancer, you can improve your survival rate by almost 50 percent by eating five or more servings of fruits and vegetables a day and walking 30 minutes, six days each week, according to the Women's Healthy Eating and Living Study. More specifically, eat at least a 1/2 cup serving each day of cruciferous vegetables: broccoli, cauliflower, kale, cabbage, turnip, bok choy, arugula, Brussels sprouts and others.

When eaten raw, these vegetables are metabolized to form a chemical that may help prevent and treat breast cancer. Alternatively, you can eat these vegetables cooked if you mix them with other uncooked cruciferous vegetables. Besides those vegetables already mentioned, a few more flavorful raw options are mustard powder, daikon radish, horseradish and wasabi.

In the past we were taught that as long as we ate a varied diet, the particulars didn't matter. Now we know that what we eat can help us stay well and can help us get better.

If you live in a home with someone who has breast cancer, please realize that besides love and support, you can assist your loved one by preparing and eating fruits and vegetables with her or him. Offer to go on that daily walk as well. You'll both benefit.

Orange and Garlic Steamed Broccoli

Serves: 4. Start to Finish: 20 minutes.

1 1/2 pounds broccoli, tough stems removed and cut into bite-size pieces

2-3 cloves garlic, minced

1/2 cups orange juice

1/3 cups white wine, reduced-sodium broth, or water

1/4 teaspoon mustard powder

Steam broccoli 5-7 minutes. Drain and set aside. Place garlic, orange juice and wine into the same pot and bring to a boil, stirring occasionally. Cook until the volume is reduced by half. Add the broccoli back to the pot and stir until the broccoli is hot. Remove from the heat and place in a serving dish. Mix in the mustard powder, garnish with something colorful, and serve.

Nutrition facts per serving: 52 calories, no fat or cholesterol, 7 g carbohydrate, 4 g sugar, 1 g fiber, 2 g protein, 17 mg sodium.

-- The Benton-Franklin Community Health Alliance's monthly food column discusses how to reduce the risk or severity of health problems by eating better. More information at www.bfcha.org.