

# Fight cancer with the healing power of diet and supplements

by Dr. Mark Stengler

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So much has been written about using diet and supplements to lower your risk of developing cancer that it could fill a library. But if you, or a loved one, have already been diagnosed with cancer, recovery is, naturally, your focus. Unfortunately, finding tips on what to do *after* a diagnosis isn't nearly as easy. But there's actually plenty you can do to cut down on the side effects of conventional cancer treatments, speed your recovery, and improve your odds of long-term survival.

Conventional oncologists know very little about nutrition, so they rarely make any dietary recommendations. Even worse, some oncologists tell patients there's no relationship between their diet and cancer.

The truth is your diet can make all the difference between recovering or succumbing to this ugly disease. And when it comes to supplements, oncologists tend to be downright hostile, believing that vitamins and herbs will interfere with conventional treatments or have no benefit. Nothing could be further from the truth.

After surgery you're at a higher risk for nutritional deficiencies (even if you didn't have preexisting ones), particularly when it comes to vitamins C and B12. And there's plenty of research showing that both during and after chemo, supplements are beneficial. The research on taking supplements during radiation therapy is less clear, but still valuable in my clinical experience.<sup>1,2,3</sup>

## **The veggie "secret" to beating back cancer**

As emotionally devastating as a cancer diagnosis is, it's also an opportunity to change your diet for the better improving not only your quality of life but your long-term survival. Of course most veggies are packed with good-for-you nutrients. For example, they're anti-inflammatory, which is important because inflammation causes cancer cells to multiply. Antioxidants also turn on helpful genes while turning off disease-promoting ones.

I recommend piling on the vegetables, and mixing them up while you're at it. The biggest nutritional bang for your buck comes from organic (pesticide-free) cruciferous vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower, and kale. They're rich in various anti-cancer compounds, and they also help your body break down, or detoxify, harmful chemicals. Fill at least half of your plate with veggies, with the rest being quality protein (fish, organically raised chicken) and a bit of gluten-free starch.

## **Detox & boost immunities with healing juice**

Fresh vegetable juices are an important part of a cancer-fighting diet. The phytonutrients found in plants provide a concentrated source of immune boosting, anti-inflammatory, and detoxifying agents. You can blend your vegetables together in water or water combined with a small amount of coconut or almond milk. If you're not a fan of the taste of vegetable juices, or you just want to mix things up a bit, feel free to add a small amount of fresh fruit juice to the mix.

Great vegetable-juice choices include kale, collard greens, tomatoes, spinach, cucumber, cabbage, carrots, beets, barley green, wheat grass, and berries. Start with six ounces daily of three or more of these anticancer foods and work up to 24 ounces or more a day.

## **Going green to give cancer a run for its money**

There are a stack of studies showing green tea's ability to fight cancer including breast, prostate, esophagus, stomach, colon, lung, skin, liver, bladder, ovary, mouth, and blood cancers. A Japanese study found that five or more cups of green tea a day could slash the risk of blood and lymph-based cancers by about 50%.<sup>4</sup>

Green tea contains a powerful group of antioxidants known as polyphenols that prevent free radicals (unstable molecules) from damaging cell DNA and tissues of the body. If you're undergoing chemotherapy or radiation check with your oncologist about the most recent research on green tea to make sure it's compatible with your therapy.

### **Slash the sugar and shrink the carbs to beat cancer**

Cancer thrives on sugar. To beat cancer it's critical that you cut back on refined sugars, potatoes, and other processed carbohydrates (sweets, white bread, pizza, pasta, bagels). Our bodies convert refined carbs to glucose and glucose is the favorite fuel source of cancer cells. These carb-laden foods increase insulin-like growth factor and blood sugar levels, which appear to cause many cancers to grow.<sup>5</sup>

Once you've slashed your carbs you may be tempted to turn to artificial sweeteners to satisfy your sweet tooth. In one word... don't. The fake sugar trap can fool you into blissfully gobbling down sweeteners while exposing you to suspected carcinogens.

Researchers at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard Medical School found a frightening link between drinking more than one serving of diet soda a day and an increased risk of developing leukemia, multiple myeloma, and non-Hodgkin's lymphomas.<sup>6</sup> Try a safe, natural alternative instead like Lo Han Kuo, honey, or stevia. To learn more about the bitter truth behind artificial sweeteners use the Username and Password found below to log into the archives, and see the January 2013 edition of *Health Revelations*.

### **Science-backed supplements can help you kick cancer**

I'm not going to tell you taking a supplement will simply *cure* your cancer because that's (generally) just not true. But what supplements CAN do is give your quality of life a big boost and, even better, send your survival odds skyrocketing. But this isn't something you should tackle on your own. Seek out the advice of an expert who can tailor a supplement program for your specific needs.

If you're a cancer patient, or are in remission, I urge you to seek the guidance of a nutritionally oriented ND or MD. But I believe an informed patient is the best kind of patient...and *your* doctor should too... so let's go over some cancer-busting supplement basics.

### **Vital vitamin D lowers your cancer risk**

Vitamin D is a real cancer-fighting superstar. This vital vitamin can help cut your cancer risk and support your recovery after a diagnosis. I find that most cancer patients are deficient in D and a medical history often reveals that they were likely deficient before their diagnosis as well.

In a recent study researchers found that leukemia and lymphoma patients were deficient in vitamin D before their diagnosis, and their deficiencies became worse after being treated with chemotherapy.<sup>7</sup> In another study, scientists found that low D levels can raise your chances of being diagnosed with breast cancer.<sup>8</sup> And a brand new report in the journal *Anticancer Research* found that breast cancer survivors with the highest vitamin D levels had HALF the death rate of those with low levels!<sup>9</sup>

But the benefits of vitamin D go so much further. More than 60 studies have found that high levels of vitamin D are associated with a lower risk of certain cancers, including those of the breast, prostate, colon, and lung, as well as leukemia and myeloma.<sup>10,11,12,13,14</sup> I typically recommend 5,000 IU of vitamin D daily with food, and more if your levels are below 50 (your doctor can run tests to determine your current numbers). Aim for a blood level of vitamin D of at least 50 ng/ml.

### **Omega-3 “miracle worker” could slash your cancer risk**

Like vitamin D, omega-3s (found in fish oils) are cancer fighters. They are anti-inflammatory, which means they essentially dampen down the biological craziness of cancer cells. And recent research revealed that omega-3s could cut your risk of breast cancer by up to one-third—as well as play an important role in treatment.<sup>15,16</sup>

In another study of women treated for metastatic breast cancer, researchers discovered that large amounts of docosahexaenoic acid (DHA)—one of the fatty acids found in fish oil—led to a significant increase in survival.<sup>17</sup> In other words, DHA literally saved lives!

Other studies have found that high-dose omega-3s combined with chemotherapy have significant benefits for patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC).<sup>18</sup> This is important because NSCLC has such a poor prognosis with conventional treatment alone. The omega-3s also help cancer patients maintain their weight.<sup>19,20</sup>

For breast cancer patients, I typically recommend taking 1,800 mg of DHA daily. For non-small cell lung cancer, I usually suggest taking approximately 2.2 grams of EPA and 240 mg of DHA daily. And for other types of cancer, I suggest taking 1,000 mg of eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and 1,000 mg of DHA.

### **Douse cancer-related inflammation with curcumin**

Curcumin, an extract of turmeric root, is one of the most powerful anti-inflammatory substances found in nature. Researchers at the M.D. Anderson Cancer Treatment Center in Houston, Texas, have studied its anticancer properties and are using it as an adjunct treatment for some cancer patients. One published report by the Center's researchers notes that curcumin blocks inflammatory processes through 97 different mechanisms!

Cancer studies have used 2 to 8 grams of curcumin daily with moderate success. In my own practice, I recommend a variety of supplements, which I think are far better than using just curcumin alone. I typically suggest taking 1500-3,000 mg daily of a well-absorbed form of curcumin. Retail brands to consider include Nature's Way, Natural Factors, and New Chapter. For even more information on this anticancer food see the May 2014 edition of *Health Revelations*.

### **Antioxidant powerhouse may help you live longer**

Coenzyme Q10 is a vitamin-like nutrient that your cells need to function. This powerful antioxidant is needed for normal energy production. There's considerable evidence that cancer involves *abnormalities* in cellular energy production, so CoQ10 might work in part by helping to re-normalize cell metabolism. The anticancer benefits of this nutrient first attracted my attention around 20 years ago, after a Danish physician published case histories demonstrating CoQ10's benefits for cancer patients.<sup>21,22</sup>

In a more recent study, a different Danish physician described his treatment of 41 patients with a variety of end-stage cancers including primary breast, esophagus, lung, pancreas, and prostate cancers. In all cases, the cancers had metastasized to other organs. The doctor's regimen provided 300 mg of CoQ10, plus several other nutrients. Three-fourths of the patients lived an average of five months longer than expected, and some patients survived years longer than expected!<sup>23</sup>

I typically suggest taking 300 to 400 mg of CoQ10 to my own patients.

### **Is multitasking selenium the key to cancer survival?**

Selenium is an essential mineral that's needed to make glutathione peroxidase, an enzyme involved in the liver's detoxification of harmful chemicals. But several studies have found that it can also help protect women who have inherited a mutation in a gene, BRCA1, which significantly increases their risk of breast cancer. In one of those studies, a team of Canadian and European researchers took a look at white blood cells obtained from 26 women with BRCA1 mutations. Those cells had a high rate of abnormalities, but after three months of selenium supplements the number of cell abnormalities dropped to normal levels.<sup>24</sup>

A second and even more significant study, this time of 200 women with the BRCA1 mutation, found that women taking selenium supplements over a two-year period had an astounding two times lower risk of developing breast cancer!<sup>25,26</sup> With incredible results like that, if selenium had been a new drug the study would have made headlines around the world. But, instead, it was virtually ignored.

I typically recommend 200 mcg of selenium a day. This is the amount found in many multivitamin and mineral supplements.

### **Barking up a tree to beat cancer**

Honokiol, an extract of the bark of the magnolia tree (*Magnolia officinalis*), appears to have significant anticancer properties. Although the emerging research so far has been conducted mostly on cells and animals, 139 journal articles have been published on this exciting therapy, giving honokiol a respectable scientific foundation.

It's believed that this all-natural, cancer-fighting weapon works by choking off tumors, denying them the nutrients they need to survive. And unlike many conventional cancer treatments honokiol is thought to bypass healthy cells, targeting only the sick cancer cells. Many naturopathic physicians in the United States are recommending this supplement to their cancer patients. The suggested dosage is 9 grams daily.<sup>27,28,29,30,31</sup>

### **Critical antioxidant boosts cancer-fighting cells**

Glutathione is critical to normal cell function including cell division and a healthy cell life cycle. And now, emerging research has revealed the antioxidant also plays a role in ridding the body of carcinogenic environmental toxins.

A recent study published in the *European Journal of Nutrition* looked at the effects of a specific type of oral glutathione (Setria) on 54 healthy adults. The study found that 1000 mg a day of glutathione increased red blood cell levels between 30 and 35 percent overall. Glutathione levels, measured in cheek cells rose, by 260% and doses as low as 250 mg daily *also* increased the antioxidants levels.<sup>32</sup> This is important because previous studies have found poor absorption rates with other glutathione products.

In addition, after three months special cancer-fighting cells—known as natural killer cells—had doubled in activity compared to placebo!<sup>33</sup> The glutathione also helped protect cells by reduced oxidative stress.

I typically recommend 500 to 1000 mg daily on an empty stomach.

I've also seen great results using intravenous glutathione in cancer patients who have finished their chemotherapy. Glutathione helped to restore their energy, brain function, and immunity after the harsh treatment. For intravenous use I recommend 1600 to 2000 mg by IV in a series of 5 to ten treatments.

### **Target tumors with fermented wheat germ extract**

I often recommend fermented wheat germ extract (FWGE) to patients with cancer. A solid stack of human research—more than 100 studies published in over 20 peer-reviewed medical journals—has shown that FWGE helps fight cancer. The benefits in these studies were crystal clear... FWGE improves quality of life, overall survival and disease-free survival.

FWGE fights cancer in several ways. It reduces the supply of glucose (sugar) to cancer cells making it harder for the tumors to survive. It also reduces a certain protein found on cancer cells making it easier for your immune system to find and target the tumor. And, finally, it enhances your immune system response against tumors.

Research has revealed that FWGE is beneficial in fighting colorectal, breast, melanoma, lung, and oral cancers.<sup>34,35,36,37</sup> It has also been shown to reduce infections in kids and teens undergoing chemotherapy.<sup>38</sup>

I typically recommend one packet containing 8.5 to 9 g of FWGE daily, mixed with eight ounces cold water or any other beverage that containing less than 10 mg vitamin C per eight-ounce serving. Store the packets at room temperature or in the refrigerator. FWGE is also available in tablets. The typical tablet dosage is 5 tabs/capsules, twice a day on an empty stomach. For more information see the January 2013 edition of *Health Revelations*.

### **Supercharge your immunities with medicinal mushrooms**

American doctors are often surprised to find that medicinal mushroom extracts are commonly administered as drugs, both orally and intravenously, by Chinese and Japanese oncologists (in addition to their common use by herbalists and traditional practitioners in those countries).

Fortunately these same powerful mushroom extracts are available as dietary supplements in the United States. There are a number of mushroom extracts which are used to supercharge the immune system. The best studied include maitake and coriolus versicolor.

Mushroom extracts contain compounds known as beta glucans which have the unique ability to stimulate your immune system to work better. They do this by increasing the number of cancer killing immune cells as well as their activity. There have been many published studies demonstrating their benefits for people with cancer. They even have been proven safe and effective for people receiving chemotherapy or radiation.

Maitake is most helpful for fighting cancers of the breast, prostate, liver, and lung. It can also be used to reduce the side effects of chemotherapy. For example, a survey of 671 patients found that combining chemotherapy with maitake treatment reduced adverse reactions (such as hair loss, pain, and nausea) as well as reduced the pain of terminal stage cancer.<sup>39</sup>

Coriolus is best used for cancers of the esophagus, lung, stomach, and colon cancer. In a study of 650 cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy and radiation the mushroom was able to significantly slash side effects.<sup>40</sup>

### **Combine supplements for the best cancer-fighting impact**

Most of the studies I've mentioned here used only a single nutritional supplement. However, in my experience taking multiple supplements to combat cancer and relieve symptoms has a greater impact. Of course the best results occur when you combine supplements with diet and lifestyle changes. A holistic medical doctor can personalize a cancer-fighting plan for you.

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### **Read this BEFORE your next barbecue!**

Since barbecues are as American as apple pie I know this next bit of advice is going to be tough to hear for many folks. The fact is, if you want to cut your cancer risk you're going to have to *also* cut back on your grilling habit. Charring meats, the blacking you see when they're cooked on the grill, produces carcinogens. You should cut back on red meat anyhow, since having too much in your diet is linked with certain cancers.

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