[IMAGE]

Foods That Fight Cancer

By James Meschino, MS, DC

What three simple words can shake just about anyone to their core? *You've got cancer.* A cancer diagnosis (or even the possibility of one) instantly brings fear, questions and thoughts about what to do. Fortunately, here's another three-word phrase that's equally as important in any cancer conversation: *This can help*. We're talking about certain compounds in foods - in this case, broccoli, cauliflower and other *cruciferous* vegetables - that may improve your odds of staying cancer-free for a lifetime.

Over the years, various studies have suggested that people who regularly consume cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, cabbage, turnips, bok choy, etc.) have lower rates of many cancers, including breast and prostate cancer. Researchers have investigated cruciferous vegetables in an attempt to identify the active agent(s) that account for this cancer-protective effect. As it turns out, cruciferous vegetables are unique in that they contain compounds called sulforaphane and indole-3-carbinol. Both of these natural agents enhance the body's ability to detoxify cancer-causing chemicals, but indole-3-carbinol in particular exhibits other impressive anti-cancer effects that should be recognized. Here are some important facts to know about cancer and what you can do to prevent it.

Your Body Makes Cancer Cells Every Day

Assorted vegetables and a boxing glove. - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark You may not realize it, but your body actually creates cancer cells every day (as old cells replace new ones). Under healthy conditions, the emerging cancer cell realizes something has gone array and initiates a series of steps that encourage the cell to commit suicide (so as to prevent it from becoming a danger to the rest of the body).

How does this work? Some of the genes in our DNA act as sensors, which are triggered when a cell is becoming cancerous, infected by a virus or bacteria, or damaged from physical trauma. Once the sensors identify a problem, the sensor genes (called *tumor suppressor genes*) instruct other genes to make specific proteins that ultimately rip apart the energy factory of the cell (causing a power outage) and destroy the genetic material of the cell (so it cannot reproduce). This leads to cell death or what researchers call "programmed cell death" or "apoptosis."

However, some emerging cancer cells become very intelligent and, in their desire to survive and multiply, produce other chemicals that prevent the cell from committing suicide via programmed cell death. This is how cancer cells get traction and give themselves the opportunity to multiply like rabbits and form malignant tumors.

Influencing Cancer Cell Replication

Via several mechanisms, indole-3-carbinol may disrupt the cancer cell's attempt to bypass programmed cell death. Experimental studies show that indole-3-carbinol and its metabolites (products made from indole-3-carbinol in the body's metabolism) not only stop the growth of certain types of cancer cells, but also trigger them into committing suicide. This is an important mechanism by which the indole-3-carbinol is thought to lower our risk of cancer.

So, in addition to speeding up the body's ability to neutralize (detoxify) and eliminate cancer-causing chemicals, indole-3-carbinol also appears to help ensure that any emerging cancer cells commit suicide before they can become a threat to the body. Research suggests supplementation with indole-3-carbinol also reverses cervical dysplasia and vulvar intraepithelial neoplasia (tumor), two precancerous conditions that occur in women, in a high percentage of cases. Another study showed that indole-3-carbinol supplementation reversed respiratory papillomas as well.

Healthier Hormones

In addition to all of these impressive cancer-fighting capabilities, indole-3-carbinol also helps prevent the buildup of the form of estrogen that is linked to breast and uterine cancers. Researchers have identified that when a woman's body makes more of one form of estrogen (16-OH estrone) and less of another form (2-OH estrone), her risk of reproductive organ cancer is greater.

Indole-3-carbinol promotes the conversion of estrone to 2-OH estrone, the form of estrone that is safer and less potent, and reduces the buildup of the dangerous 16-OH estrone. It's not just a woman thing, as studies reported in the *International Journal of Nutrition and Cancer* indicate that higher intake of cruciferous vegetables is also associated with a reduced risk of developing prostate cancer.

Prevent Cancer With Good Nutrition

Indole-3-carbinol may be one of the most powerful cancer-fighting nutrients ever identified. In order to derive optimal benefits from this important compound, you should consume broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts or some combination of cruciferous vegetables at least four to five times per week. In addition, you should consider indole-3-carbinol supplementation to further optimize your cancer defenses on a daily basis.

A practical way to accomplish this is to take a daily supplement that contains an additional 25 mg of indole-3-carbinol per capsule, and also includes milk thistle (which boosts detoxification function at the cellular level) and two important immune-system boosters: reishi mushroom extract and astragalus. The reason to combine these nutrients is because your body's detoxification and immune systems work hand-in-glove to help prevent cancer. Talk to your doctor about how to reduce your risk of developing cancer and other diseases through the proven power of nutrition.

A Cruciferous Vegetable a Day Could Keep Cancer Away

Cruciferous vegetables are edible plants from the *Brassicaceae* or *Cruciferae* botanical family, and they're among the most popular vegetables consumed, which is great news considering their anti-cancer benefits. If brussels sprouts aren't your cup of tea, have no fear; there are more than 20 different types of cruciferous vegetables to choose from, including the following:

Arugala - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark

- **Arugula**
- Bok Choy
- Broccoli

Kale - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark

- Broccoflower
- Cabbage
- Cauliflower

Turnip - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark

- Collard Greens
- **Kale**
- Radish

- Rutabaga
- **Turnip**
- Watercress

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