

## Alberta Healthy Living Program (Diversity, Mandarin, and Cantonese)

- ✓ Project: pre-recorded interviews in Mandarin and Cantonese with the host at Fairchild Radio, FM 947
- ✓ Total airtime: 15 minutes per segment to present information.
- ✓ Suggested topic: Breast Cancer will be divided into 2 segments of 15 minutes each. That means 2 segments in Mandarin show, and 2 segments in Cantonese show. These segments will be broadcasted on the radio in the **first week of October and in the first week of November 2024.**

### Introduction on breast cancer:

October is Breast Cancer Awareness month! Breast cancer is the most common cancer in Canadian women.

Canadian Cancer statistics estimated in 2024, 30,500 Canadian women will be diagnosed with breast cancer. On average, this number represent about 84 Canadian women being diagnosed with breast cancer every day.

Breast cancer mostly occurs in women between 50 and 69 years of age.

One of the famous phrases described by Julie Landford (a dietitian), “Nutrition isn’t a treatment for cancer. It’s part of putting the odds in your favor”.

There are different treatments for breast cancer. The type you receive depends on stage and type of breast cancer you have. It could involve surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapy, or a combination of these.

The role of nutrition is to maintain and repair cells and tissues in your body. Nutrition and eating well:

- Gives you energy
- Helps to keep your muscles strong
- Helps you heal from treatment
- Improves outcomes
- Prevents muscle loss
- Reduces some side-effects of treatments (like surgery)
- Supports your immune system

## What are the common factors which would increase my risk for developing breast cancer?

### Non-modifiable risk factors such as:

1. being a women
2. age
3. race/ ethnicity (white women are slightly more likely to breast cancer than black, Hispanic and Asian women)
4. family history (women with close relatives, especially mothers, sisters or daughters who have been diagnosed with breast cancer have a higher chance of developing the disease)
5. genetics (about 5 to 10% of breast cancers are thought to be hereditary caused by abnormal genes passed from parent to child)

### Modifiable risk factors, closely related to lifestyle such as:

1. Stop Smoking.
2. No alcohol consumption of any kind.
3. Being active.
4. Eating a healthy diet.

Nevertheless, it is important to note that sometimes breast cancer develops in women who don't have any of the risk factors described above.

## How can I reduce my risk of getting breast cancer?

- ✓ Eat a variety of healthy foods each day. Follow Canada's Food Guide and Eat Well Plate.
- ✓ Eat plenty of plant-based foods:
  - Plant foods contain healthy compounds and many of which may help decrease risk or the progress of breast cancer.
- ✓ Include protein foods at each meal.
- ✓ Choose healthy fats while limiting unhealthy fats.
  - Healthy fats like oils (Canola, Olive, Peanut)
  - Unhealthy fats like animal fat (skins), palm oil, coconut oil
- ✓ Target Best Weight (this is the weight you are healthy at but still enjoying the food and activity).
- ✓ Target zero alcohol consumption:
  - There is strong evidence that drinking any amount of alcohol increase our risk of developing breast cancer

## Do men get breast cancer?

Yes. Breast cancer in men is rare, making up less than 1% of all breast cancers. Men have breast tissue just like women, but their breasts are less developed. Canada Cancer statistics estimated that in 2024, ~ 290 Canadian men will be diagnosed with breast cancer.

## Are there specific foods that prevent breast cancer? Is there a magic food that boosts your immune system?

Many people wonder whether eating specific foods will boost their immune system and help them fight cancer. Some studies found that diet is thought to be partly responsible for about 30% to 40% of all cancers. It is important to note that there is no single diet, food or supplement can boost your immune system and prevent you from getting breast cancer.

The best thing you can do for your immune system and to keep your risk for breast cancer as low as possible is to follow an overall healthy lifestyle, which includes eating a balanced, healthy diet with a variety of foods.

## I was recently diagnosed with breast cancer. Is there a diet to DVSE cancer?

There is no scientific evidence that any specific food or diet (for example, the alkaline diet) can cure cancer. Because dieting often restricts food choices (like meat, milk, eggs and even vegetables and fruit), they may not provide enough calories, protein, vitamins and minerals. This can lead to weight loss and poor nutrition. If you're considering an unconventional or alternative diet, please discuss with your healthcare team.

## I am concerned about growth hormones in meat and dairy products. Do I need to purchase meats and dairy products labelled with "hormones-free"?

Hormones occur naturally in all people, animals, and plants. As such, there are no hormone-free meat and dairy products.

Health Canada regulates the use of growth hormones in Canada. Hormones are approved for use in beef cows, but they are not allowed for use in milk-producing cows or in poultry or pork in Canada. In other countries, hormones may be allowed. This is important to know as you may be

reading or hearing about hormones pertaining to another country, like the United States, and their food supply.

The good news based on current research is that there is no evidence that shows hormones used in beef causes cancer.

Meat and dairy foods provide a good source of protein and can be included in a healthy diet.

### **I am thinking of eating a vegetarian diet. How can I make sure that I am getting all the nutrients I need especially protein?**

Vegetarian diets are defined by the types of foods that are included. Some vegetarian diets include milk and/or eggs. You may not get enough protein when following a “vegan” diet or a vegetarian diet because it excludes or limits animal products such as meat, eggs and milk.

Protein can help us to maintain muscle, fight fatigue, heal and help us to feel better during and after cancer treatment. Therefore, it is important to include protein foods at each meal.

To get enough protein with this diet you need 350ml (2 fists size) of cooked legumes or 125ml (3/4 cup) tofu or 120ml (1/2 fist size) of shelled unsalted nuts and seeds two servings daily from alternatives of meat group.

### **I have read that sugar is bad for the immune system – sugar “feeds” cancer. Do I need to avoid all forms of sugar?**

No. Sugar “feeds” all the cells in our body. Cancer cells need sugar to grow just like healthy cells do, but sugar does not feed cancer cells any more than it feeds the other cells in our body.

Sugar is simply a form of carbohydrate. It is found naturally in foods, such as fruits, vegetables, grains, milk, and honey. Avoiding all foods with carbohydrates can be unsafe during cancer treatment. When you avoid all carbohydrates, you can weaken your body and decrease how well your immune system works.

### **I have heard that soy foods and flax seeds are good for us, but I also heard that soy foods and flax seeds contain estrogen. Do I need to avoid soy foods and flax seeds in my diet? Would you then suggest that I take supplements instead?**

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Soy foods and flax seeds have not been found to increase the risk of breast cancer returning. They contain phytoestrogens which are similar to estrogen found in the body, however they do not act the same way.

Only limit soy and flaxseed IF you have had hormone-based cancers such as breast cancer. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends eating up to 3 servings of soy foods a day. One serving of soy is equal to  $\frac{3}{4}$  cup (175ml) edamame, 1 cup (250ml) fortified soy beverage, or  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup (125ml) tofu,  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup (60ml) soy nuts.

Eating a moderate amount of whole soy is safe and may have a protective effect (up to 3 servings per day).

The most current guidelines for flaxseed include eating ground flaxseed not more than 2 tablespoons (30ml) each day.

### **Are there any supplements which I should take to prevent breast cancer?**

There is no evidence that taking more than the recommended amounts of vitamins and minerals or that taking large amounts of any vitamin or mineral will improve your health or help to prevent or cure cancer.

In fact, taking too much of some types of vitamins or minerals can be harmful to your health – and it may even make cancer treatment less effective.

Eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruits whole grains, fish, nuts, legumes can provide you with all adequate the essential vitamins and minerals our need.

### **I am taking herbal medicines and supplements while I am receiving treatment for cancer, because they are natural.**

Herbal medicine has been around the world for used, over thousands of years. It is used to treat many types of illness. Herbal medicine refers to chemicals found in plants, it is a specific kind of natural medicine different from vitamins, minerals and homeopathy.

There are many reasons why people with cancer use herbal medicine.

The most important thing to note is that herbal medicines can stop your treatment for cancer to work properly. This is called drug interaction.

It is best to share with your health care team about your herbal medicines. They can let you know if your herbal medicines will interfere with your cancer treatment.

### **How do I know if my supplements are safe?**

(1) Is there a Natural Product Number (NPN) on the package of the supplements?

An NPN is an 8-digit number found on some supplement packages sold in Canada. Health Canada indicate products with an NPN are safe and effective if you follow the instructions / directions on the label. But these products may still have side effects when mixed with other medicines or alcohol.

(2) Have you read the fine print on the package of the supplements?

Many supplements have extra ingredients added to the supplement. If you have a food allergy or intolerance to certain ingredients, it is important to check the ingredient list to make sure it is safe for you to take. Even though over the counter supplements are not prescription, they should still be treated as such. Speak with your pharmacist first before taking any supplement.

### **Is there a difference between natural and laboratory (synthetic) made vitamins?**

There is no difference between a vitamin made in a laboratory (synthetic) vs one in its natural form. Once ingested into the body, these vitamins are used in the same way and for the same functions.

### **Do you have any additional information which I should watch for before I purchase a supplement?**

1. No supplement has been proved to *cure* diseases such as cancer. Always stay cautious of supplements that promise quick and dramatic results.
2. A generic brand (or store brand) often works just as well as a name-brand supplement. Look for generic brands that contain the same amount of vitamins and minerals as the name brand.

## How can Alberta Healthy Living Program help support the Chinese in the community?

- ✓ We have Registered Dietitian speaking both Mandarin and Cantonese who can offer one-on-one advice via phone, Zoom or in person meeting.
- ✓ These services have no charge and are covered by Alberta Health. You do not need a referral from a health care provider - you can just call to book appointment.
- ✓ All our programs and services can be accessed through one toll-free number: 1-844-527-1160.
- ✓ Better choices, better health (BCBH) for chronic disease management and BCBH-chronic pain that are offered in Cantonese, and they can register for this 6-week program (one 2.5-hour session per week) by calling one toll-free: 1-844-527-1160.