

Survivorship: Eating Well Together

Healthy eating, healing and prevention for the American Indian cancer survivor and family

► Why is it important for a cancer survivor to eat healthy?

Nutrition affects every aspect of cancer, from prevention, to treatment and remission. Maintain a healthy diet before, during and after cancer treatment to help your body heal.

5 HEALTHY EATING TIPS FOR SURVIVORS

- 1 Drink plenty of water and other low calorie drinks to stay hydrated.
- 2 Snack every few hours to help give the body energy to heal.
- 3 Include protein (fish, beans, eggs, peanut butter, etc.) with every meal to help with strength and mood.
- 4 Eat fruits and vegetables with each meal. The vitamins, minerals and fiber are medicines.
- 5 Consume good fats (salmon, olive oil, nuts, avocado, etc.) to help your body process nutrients and supports brain health.

What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease in which cells in the body grow out of control. Cancer is not one disease. There are many types of cancer that affects each person and their bodies differently.

What is a cancer survivor?

A **cancer survivor** is any person who has been diagnosed with cancer, from the initial time of diagnosis, through treatment and remission until their journey into the spirit world.

HEALTHY COOKING METHODS

- ▶ Boil, sauté, steam or poach your food to retain nutrients.
- ▶ Avoid exposing food to an open flame. Cooking that darkens foods (frying, toasting, grilling) increases levels of cancer causing substances.
- ▶ Avoid high nitrate foods (ham, bacon, hot dogs, etc.). These can interact with other chemicals in your diet to create cancer-causing substances.

FOOD SAFETY

- ▶ Wash your hands thoroughly when preparing meals.
- ▶ Never place cooked food on a plate that previously held raw meat, poultry, seafood or eggs unless the plate has been washed.
- ▶ Sanitize utensils, cutting boards and countertops when preparing meals.
- ▶ Store foods at the appropriate temperatures (<40°F and >140°F).

FAMILY: HEALTHY, STRONG AND CONNECTED

- ▶ Spend time together and remember to laugh.
- ▶ Harvest and grow your own Indigenous foods to experience how our ancestors lived healthy.
- ▶ Support your survivor on their food journey by making changes to your food habits with them.
- ▶ Learn more about how food can support the family and survivor healing to be supportive of your family.

What can we do?

▶▶ How do we support healthy eating for our survivor?

ELDERS

- ▶ Share traditional knowledge for healthy eating and good way of life.
- ▶ Teach words for foods in your traditional language.
- ▶ Tell stories about family food and harvesting traditions.

TEENAGERS

- ▶ Be a role model for your family members. Understand that what you eat directly impacts their food choices.
- ▶ Choose healthy options over soda, candy and other processed foods.
- ▶ Go with an adult when they shop for groceries. This way, you can pick out your own healthy food.

ADULTS

- ▶ Be aware that your food purchases shape your family's overall health.
- ▶ Bring healthy snacks to outings and events (unsalted almonds, apple slices, baby carrots or unsweetened dried fruit).
- ▶ Set household rules for family meals that include healthy options and limit unhealthy options. Keep your survivor in mind.

CHILDREN

- ▶ Encourage your family to grow food. Pick a few seeds that you want to try and ask an adult to plant them with you.
- ▶ Think of how your food makes you feel. Stay away from foods that make you feel sluggish or hyper.

AS A FAMILY

- 1 Organize healthy family meals where a family member gets to decide what to eat and everyone helps out.
- 2 Eat fresh, unprocessed Indigenous meats like bison, venison, rabbit and turkey that help with healing.
- 3 Don't make too many changes in your diet too quickly. Focus on making a small single change each week and see how it goes.
- 4 Keep trying new foods and recipes, you never know what you and your kids may like.
- 5 Educate yourself on food labels. For example, "low fat" can contain more sugar to make up for the loss of flavor from the fat. Look for foods and beverages with "no added sugars," "whole grain," and a shorter list of ingredients.
- 6 Support breastfeeding mothers. Breastfeeding helps prevent cancer for mom and baby.

- ▶ **Indigenous Foods:** foods native to local area.
- ▶ **Unhealthy Options:** sugary drinks and processed foods high in sugar, sodium and saturated fat.
- ▶ **Healthy Options:** water, fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins and unprocessed foods.