

DIET, LIFESTYLE AND SELF HELP STRATEGIES AFTER PROSTATE CANCER

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There is now strong evidence that people living with and beyond cancer can significantly benefit from sensible lifestyle, dietary and self-help strategies. Scientific studies have shown these can, not only, reduce many of the toxicities of treatments, but improve their effectiveness, slow the rate of cancer progression and even reduce the risk of relapse. Before delving into details, however, it must be noted that this does not apply to everyone, as each patient's body and disease are unique. It is about reducing the risks, so nobody should feel guilty that their disease is progressing or relapsing, no matter how hard they try. There is a lot of misinformation in the public domain but here are some tips and advice for strategies which have the most reliable evidence:

Summary of content

- Physical activity and recreational exercise - how much and when
- Weight management - practical tip including avoiding ultra-processed sugars
- Fruit, cruciferous vegetables and other phytochemical rich foods
- Gut health and our microbiome - practical tips for fermented foods and prebiotic fibre
- Fats and oils - How to increase healthy omega's and avoid unhealthy varieties
- Dietary minerals and why we need them
- Vitamin D - importance of healthy levels, sensible sun exposure and dietary tips
- Soy and phytoestrogenic foods specific for prostate
- Sleep - Natural ways to improve quality and circadian rhythm
- Carcinogens - What are they and how to avoid them
- Cold water immersion - New evidence for hot and cold showers
- Nutritional supplements - The evidence for their benefits and risks explained:
 - Vitamin D - idea doses and combinations
 - Other vitamins - the potential harm for vitamin E and A
 - Phytochemical rich food supplements and the latest Yourphyto study
 - Probiotics and prebiotic supplements and role for yourgutplus
 - Omega 3 and 6 oils from fish and algae
 - Medicinal mushrooms - recent trends and which combinations
 - Mineral supplements - why combine all the essential minerals including iodine
 - Supplements with little benefit - e.g. saw palmetto and lycopene
 - Ingredients which should be avoided - e.g. cloves, spearmint and soy extracts

Physical activity / Exercise:

Regular exercise can reduce fatigue and in the longer term improve mood, weight control and overall quality of life. 2-3 hours of physical activity a week, especially if combined with other with lifestyle manoeuvres, can reduce the rate of cancer progression and reduced the risk of relapse after radical treatments. Exercise in the morning, such as short walk outside in the daylight, before breakfast, can support the circadian rhythm and enhance healthy sleep patterns. It is useful to stretch before and after exercise to help with joint mobility and stiffness. It is particularly important to avoid long periods of sedentary activity such as sitting. Exercise should be performed regularly and sustained in the long term, so it should be enjoyable and convenient. Fortunately, there are many choices including gardening, dancing, brisk walking, golf, running, cycling, swimming etc. It would be a good idea, and more cost effective to join an exercise class locally, but if not convenient there are online resources such as the 'FITMED.com', which offers bespoke supervised programme along with psychological support.



Weight management, sugar and ultra-processed foods:

Being overweight increases the risk of cancer, other chronic diseases and troublesome symptoms such as joint pains, hot flushes, low moods in the body, poor wound healing and blood clots. It is often very difficult to reduce weight after cancer treatments, especially those which effect hormone levels. Some of the evidence based strategies to help you lose weight include extending the overnight fast to 13 hours, increasing exercise levels, reducing processed sugar, increasing intake of phytochemical rich foods and improving gut health. It would be sensible to avoid snacking between meals especially late into the evening. As well as processed sugar, try to eliminate highly processed carbohydrates. Although initially satisfying, these are absorbed rapidly, spiking insulin levels which convert these high energy foods into fat and cholesterol. Sugar levels then fall rapidly causing fatigue and hunger encouraging people to then eat more again. Sugar also negatively affects gut bacteria contributing to poor gut health and increase inflammation, both of which is linked to weight gain. Many studies link process sugar with a higher cancer risk, adding sugar to tea or coffee, for example, negates their otherwise protective benefits. Having sugar first thing in the morning or on an empty stomach has negative impact, so it's advisable to start the day with slow release, complex carbohydrates, whole fruits and whole grain and try to avoid sugary snacks between meals.



Fruit, cruciferous vegetables and other phytochemical rich food:

Plants and spices are a rich source of vitamins, minerals, prebiotic fibres and healthy natural



compounds called phytochemicals. These give food their natural colour, taste and aroma, but also help to reduce excess inflammation, improve antioxidant pathways and boost gut flora. Their higher intake is linked to a lower risk of symptoms and conditions, more common after treatments such as joint stiffness, hot flushes, low mood, heart disease, raised cholesterol, high blood pressure and diabetes. Trials have reported lower breast cancer recurrence associated with green tea intake, dietary lignans and soy products. Individuals with skin cancer who had higher intake of leafy green vegetables had a lower rate of subsequent new cancer formation. Other foods, particularly rich in phytochemicals, which include fruit, vegetables, herbs, spices, nuts, mushrooms, beans, seeds and teas. It would be beneficial to eat as many of these every day, preferably with every meal. If your diet is lacking in these, it would be sensible to boost phytochemical levels with a well-made supplement (see below).

Gut health and our microbiome.

Looking after the healthy bacteria in the gut can help avoid symptoms such as indigestion, bloating and intermittent diarrhoea and constipation. People with poor gut health are more prone to catching viral infections such as covid, experience fatigue, reduced concentration, be de-motivated and have poor sleep patterns. They tend to suffer from joint stiffness, menopausal symptoms and weight gain. In the long term, they have an increased risk of inflammatory bowel disease, bowel cancer and cancers elsewhere in the body, raised cholesterol, diabetes, skin problems, arthritis and dementia. Radiotherapy, chemotherapy and surgery can directly damage the gut wall, but lifestyle factors that influence the ratio of healthy to unhealthy bacterial profile in the gut have significant impact. These include:



- Exercising regularly
- Avoid snacking between meals or late at night
- Eating less Ultra Processed Foods (UPF) made from meat or plant substitutes
- Reducing alcohol intake – especially beer and spirits
- Reducing processed sugar or highly processed carbohydrates such as white bread
- Avoiding artificial sweeteners or additives in ultra-processed foods
- Eating more prebiotic rich foods such as:
 - beans, artichokes, mushrooms, fruit, vegetables and nuts
- Eating more probiotic rich foods such as:
 - fermented foods, live yoghurts (kefir), miso soup, tempeh, kimchi & sauerkraut

After changing to a prebiotic/probiotic rich diet some people may feel bloated and get wind initially but this usually settles within a few days as the fermentation settles. If these symptoms do not settle, as well as discussing with the GP, good quality probiotic/prebiotic supplement may be appropriate. For Further advice about gut health see keep-healthy.com/gut-health.

Vitamin D:

Low vitamin D is linked to a higher risk of developing prostate cancer and a number of other cancers



including breast and bowel cancer. There is also evidence that low levels after treatment can increase the risk of relapse. Chronically low levels are also linked to fatigue, lower mood, osteoporosis, lower immunity and infections such as covid and in the long term cognitive issues, dementia and heart disease. It is estimated that the skin produces almost 80% of the body's required vitamin D. The most important way to increase vitamin D levels is to try and get regular but controlled sun exposure. Over the winter months, unless you can get one or two holidays in the sun at good quality Vitamin D supplements is sensible. Some vitamin D is found in oily fish, fresh green leafy vegetables, grains and some fortified cereals, nuts, yeast products and Sun-dried mushrooms.

Fats and oils:

Healthy fats such as omega 3 are a good source of slow-release energy. They also support the immune system and control of inflammatory pathways. Eating oily fish 2-3 times a week has been linked to a lower cancer risk, probably due to its' omega 3 and mineral content. Omega 3 can also be derived from flax, chia seeds and nuts (particularly walnuts), avocados, seafood such as oily fish, oysters, clams and seaweed.

A recent study demonstrated that increasing omega 3 oils reducing cheap seed and corn oils which have been heated to high temperatures significantly slowed prostate cancer progression.



Dietary minerals:

These are essential for hormone and enzyme production including those used for anti-oxidant defences. They cannot be made by the body and therefore need to be ingested. Intensive farming, lack of food diversity and over-cleaning are depleting many minerals from our foods and some, such as iodine, are now commonly deficient in our diet, leading to thyroid disorders and fatigue. As well as oysters, clams, fish and seaweed, minerals can be found in nuts, pumpkin seeds and berries.



Soy and phytoestrogenic foods:

Higher consumption of soya based foods has been linked to a lower prostate cancer risk, especially unfermented varieties such as soya beans, soya milk and tofu. Woman who eat soy products after breast cancer are reported to have a lower relapse rate. Soy is rich in protein, vitamins, minerals and fibre but additionally have mild hormonal effects which dampens the influence of oestrogen and testosterone on sensitive cancer cells. Other healthy phytoestrogenic rich foods include flax, chia seeds, lentils and chick peas. Soy supplements, however, contain too high a doses of phytoestrogenic isoflavones, so are best avoided.



Sleep:

Insomnia is common after a cancer for several psychological and physical reasons, often not helped by ongoing medications. Lack of sleep can lead to fatigue, brain fog, weight-gain, de-motivation to exercise and undertaking healthy living programmes. In the longer term, the emphasis should be on sleep hygiene, exercise to improve circadian rhythm, natural ways to improve mood, relax and melatonin levels with specific foods such as citrus fruits, pomegranate, resveratrol, turmeric and chamomile (See: keep-healthy.com/sleep).

Avoiding carcinogens:

Although the initial damage has been done for the first cancer, ongoing exposure to carcinogens can cause further mutations in DNA, increase chronic inflammation or have adverse hormonal effects. These factors can increase the risk of a secondary cancer forming or the original cancer becoming more aggressive. Endocrine disrupting chemicals can be found in cosmetics, household products, plastics and environment pollutants, collectively known as xenoestrogens. It would be sensible to limit the number of household cleaning agents and keep the house well ventilated when they are used. Try to reduce the amount of use of paraben containing cosmetics, perfumes or deodorants and avoid air fresheners in the house. Ideally use plain or naturally scented soap instead of shower gels, and avoid gels or shampoos lots of preservatives and chemicals especially if provided in plastic containers. Microplastics are present in water stored in plastic bottles and tap water and can mostly be removed with a water filter. Avoid microwaving food in plastic containers; transfer food to glass or ceramic dishes first. Swap plastic storage containers for glass or stainless steel ones. Smoking cigarettes one of the worse carcinogen habits, excess alcohol is harmful but small amounts 1-2 days a week has limited risks. Smoked foods, as well as ultra-processed, burnt or smoked meat and plant products, are heavy in carcinogens. More information on carcinogens can be found on keep-healthy.com/carcinogens.

Cold water immersion (Hot and cold showers):

There is an increasing body of evidence to show that cold water immersion can help improve immunity, elevate mood, reduce hormonal type symptoms, joint stiffness and reduce excess inflammation. Research suggests 1-2 minutes cool is enough to gain a benefit, especially if the face is included. Other studies have shown similar benefits for hot and cold showers or saunas.

Nutritional supplements

It is well reported that over 60% of men and women, after cancer, take some form of nutritional supplement. Some are a safe, reliable way to boost healthy elements in food, others have no benefit so represent a financial burden and some can even cause harm. In general, it would be wise to stick to supplements which have been investigated in clinical studies and have demonstrated effectiveness



and safety and. Here is a very brief summary of what we know so far:

Vitamin D: Ongoing studies are trying to establish the role for vitamin D supplements, over and above sensible sun exposure and diet. In the mean-time, as many people in Northern climates have deficiencies, especially in the darker months, many doctors agree that a vitamin D supplement of about 1000iu would be sensible. There are lots of brands available over the counter but recent evidence has shown that vitamin D combined with a probiotic enhances both its absorption and utilisation (eg [Yourgutplus](#)). Taking extra calcium with vitamin D is usually not required, provided you not taking bone hardening drugs, such as alendronic or ibandronic acid and provided you have some kefir, cheese, nuts, seeds and oily fish in the diet. Likewise, vitamin K2 is not necessary provided you have an adequate intake of foods such as seaweed, mature cheese such as stilton, grass-fed animal products, fermented foods such as kimchi and sauerkraut.

Other vitamins: Eating citrus fruit, seeds, nuts and vegetables will ensure adequate intake of most vitamins. High doses of vitamin C has no extra advantages in people with normal levels. A vitamin B12 supplement will help those who are vegetarian. Marmite is a good source of many vitamin B's.

Unless known to be deficient, it would be best to avoid A or E in a supplement form as, although, deficiency of vitamin A and E is still common in developing countries, in the west, this is rare. Of more concern, a number of studies giving vitamin E and A have actually reported an increased risk of cancer of the lung, skin and prostate. This is due to their direct antioxidant properties which can override oxidative pathways as opposed to natural phytochemicals which improve antioxidant and immune efficiency. It would be better to obtain vitamin E and A in nuts, carrots, pumpkin seeds and oily fish as opposed to supplements.



Phytochemical rich food supplements: Of the hundreds of different concentrated foods supplements on the market - most have not been evaluated in formal clinical studies. In 2013, a supplement containing turmeric, green tea, broccoli and pomegranate trial did demonstrate a slowing of PSA progression in men with prostate cancer managed with Active Surveillance (AS), but this trial has now been superseded with a larger more recent comprehensive study.

In 2025, the same research group at Bedford and Addenbrooke's Cambridge University Hospitals, collaborated with nutritional and medical scientists to new supplement called [YourPhyto](#). It's impact on various of cancer, strength and longevity were evaluated in a UK double blind Randomised Clinical Trial which is now the largest and most academically recognised evaluation of a nutraceutical food supplement, to date. The supplement, [Yourphyto](#), has extra ingredients and embraces food evolved over the last 14 years. It now has cranberry,



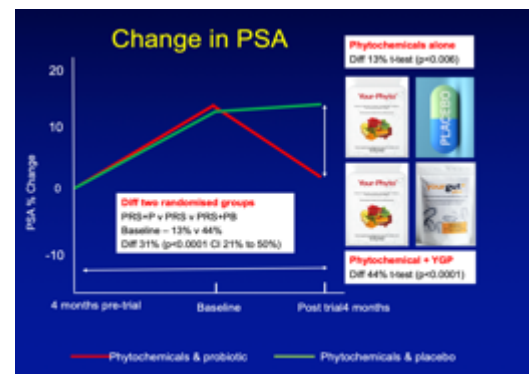
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pomegranate, turmeric, green tea, ginger and it is as the only blend that contains whole foods alongside targeted extracts from the same plant. This dual approach allows a broad spectrum of phytochemicals from the entire plant, while enhancing intake of the candidate phytochemicals responsible for their health benefits. In the trial, which involved 212 men with prostate cancer, the rate of PSA slowed by 44% (a much greater effect than seen in the previous study). Men given YourPhyto alone benefited, but the effect was even greater in men who were also given a 5 blend lactobacillus probiotic capsule called [YourGutplus](#).

The study also demonstrated, significant Improvements in well-being and symptoms:

- Urinary symptoms
- Urinary quality of life scores
- Need to get out of bed to urinate
- Ability of get and maintain an erection
- Blood markers of systemic inflammation
- Blood levels of Vitamin D
- Grip strength a biomarker of well-being



Probiotics and prebiotic supplements: Although emphasis should be always be on dietary and lifestyle measures to improve gut health, certain probiotic supplement can be a useful way boost the intake of the beneficial "friendly" bacteria. There are a lot of misconceptions, however, about their safety and effectiveness, often from doctors and other medical professions especially if taken by patients on cancer treatments. Millions of people around the world regularly consume probiotics daily in supplement form with few adverse events. There are only rare instances of excess small bowel bacterial overgrowth with prolonged excessive use of probiotics such as E.coli but the risk of adverse effects with Lactobacillus use was one estimated in one comprehensive French study, to be at about case per 10 million people over a century of probiotic consumption. Moreover, other two large Italian and finish studies concluded the risk of lactobacillemia as 'unequivocally negligible', at <1 case per million individuals. Lactobacillus probiotics have been safely administered to immunocompromised patients with HIV or patients receiving chemotherapy, suffers of long covid, the elderly and even with Crohn's disease, without any side-effects, provide further care and evidence of poor opportunistic pathogenicity. Probiotics have been administered to patients who are severely ill in intensive thousands of new born infants, including some who were premature, without a single case of sepsis. The National Institute of Health published a meta-analysis of 13 RCTs involving potentially immunocompromised patients on chemotherapy, reported a significant reduction in diarrhoea, neutropenia and an improvement in other symptom. radiotherapy, immunotherapies With these data in mind it would be sensible to stick to lactobacillus rather than more complex blends, as these have the most data on their safety and effectiveness. Yourgutplus blend is currently the most researched blend internationally, chosen for two Covid



studies a Covid vaccine study and the large prostate cancer nutritional intervention study described above.

Fish oil / omega supplements: There are some clinical trials which have reported benefits after breast cancer but possibly some negative effects of fish oil supplements after prostate cancer. This may be related to excess vitamin E intake which is used as a preservative or the use of cod-liver oil which is very high in vitamin A. Some oils have been found by the consumer watchdog consumerlab.com to contain dioxins and PCB, as they use fish from polluted seas or fish that are higher up the food chain. If exposed to heat, oxygen and light, fish oils are broken down into substances such as aldehydes which have carcinogenic properties. There are some omega 3 supplements preserved with rosemary (with a lower amount of vitamin E), particularly those made from algae, and which potentially also avoid heavy metal accumulation in some fish. To avoid oxidation (rancid changes), it is wise to keep fish oil supplements in the fridge, in the dark and use well before their expiry dates.



Medicinal mushrooms: These are the subject of a lot of recent interest but they have been used for thousands of years. Health claims include reducing the risk of allergy, cancer, diabetes, infection and inflammation and improving digestion, mood, mental alertness, arthralgia, sports performance, brain function and energy levels. They are good source of plant protein, minerals, fibre, vitamins, phytochemicals, prebiotic fibres and compounds called polysaccharides such as β -glucans and which can directly enhance gut health. Although the evidence from laboratory trials are promising, more robust clinical studies in human are awaited. If you are keen to try these in supplement form, ideally, it would be better to take a broad spectrum blend such as [YourFungi](#).



Mineral supplements: Many people take individual minerals such as magnesium, selenium or Zinc - this does not really make sense and be a lot cheaper to take all the essential mineral in one supplement. The mineral often overlooked is iodine which is frequently deficient in individuals who don't regularly eat mineral rich foods such as pumpkin seeds, shell fish or seaweed, a multi-mineral supplement with iodine, such as [PhytoMineral](#), would be sensible.

Sleeping aids: Melatonin tablets, can be prescribed by GP's in the UK and available OTC in other countries, can help in the short term in the short-term but are not recommended for long term use. Magnesium only helps people who have an underlying deficiency so taking more than needed does not help. Over-the-counter 'sedating', remedies such as decongestants, anti-histamines and valerian can help for a few days but their duration of benefit gets shorter the longer they are taken, then it's hard to withdraw from taking them. The ingredients of a non-sedating supplement called "[PhytoNight](#)" benefited men and women in a large long covid trial as it contains citrus bioflavonoids, pomegranate, resveratrol, turmeric and chamomile known for their mood and relaxation properties.

Saw Palmetto and lycopene: Higher intake of foods such as tomatoes and peppers have been linked to a lower cancer incidence. Although there was some initial suggestions from small studies, concentrating specific extracts from these foods, in larger more robust trials reported no benefit.

Cloves, spearmint and soy extracts. These contain very high levels of phytochemicals and can have negative, over-direct antioxidant effects. Although whole and fermented soy based foods are beneficial, removing extracts from soy such as genistein or using concentrated have too great an influence on hormonal pathways which explains why laboratory studies have reported potential harm - so it's best to avoid any supplements containing these ingredients.

Further information resources

Website: [Keep-healthy.com](https://www.keep-healthy.com)
Youtube: [ProfthomasMD](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCF8t8t8t8t8t8t8t8t8t8t8)
Book: [How to Live](https://www.howtolive.com)
News: [Lifestyle Newsletter](https://www.lifestyle-newsletter.com)
Instagram: [HealthnetUK](https://www.healthnetuk.com)



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