



Cancer Busters

by author Matthew Kadey, MSc, RD

Always choose organic when stocking up on your cancer-busting foods. Not only are certified organic products better for the environment, free from chemical sprays and genetically modified organisms, they also contain higher levels of nutrients and antioxidants.

There's good news from a batch of recent studies. Findings suggest what we put in our grocery carts and on our dinner plates can slash the risk of several kinds of cancer

The following all-star foods can help protect you, head to toe, against the Big C.

Cranberries

Target:

Colon cancer, the second leading cause of male and female cancer-related deaths in Canada.



The Journal of the Science of Food and Agriculture reports antioxidant-loaded cranberries may prevent colon cancer by decreasing inflammation.

Try This:

In a medium saucepan, combine 1 1/2 cups (350 mL) fresh or frozen cranberries, 3 pears or apples, peeled and diced, 1/2 cup (125 mL) sugar, 1/2 cup (125 mL) dried cherries, and 1/2 cup (125 mL) water. Bring to a boil over medium heat and simmer for 15 minutes, stirring frequently. Serve over yogurt.

Kale

Target:

Uterine cancer, the most common cancer of the female reproductive organs.

Researchers at the Cancer Institute of New Jersey reported that increased intake of beta carotene and vitamin C, two potent antioxidants, may reduce uterine cancer risk in women. Kale is well endowed with both.

Try This:

Tear leaves off the stems of 1 bunch kale and cut into bite-size pieces. Spread pieces on a baking sheet. Toss with 2 tsp (10 mL) oil and sea salt to taste; bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until just crisp. Enjoy as a healthy snack.

Eggs

Target:

Breast cancer. According to the Canadian Cancer Society, one in nine Canadian women will develop breast cancer.

A 2008 study from Mount Sinai School of Medicine found the risk of developing breast cancer was 24 percent lower among women who had the highest intake of choline, a nutrient needed for normal cell function. One egg, specifically the yolk, contains roughly one-quarter the recommended daily intake.

Try This:

Place whole eggs directly on the barbecue grill over medium heat. Cook for about 10 minutes or until shell is golden brown all over. Peel and chop over a green salad.

Brazil nuts

Target:

Skin cancer. The rate of this disease continues to increase among Canadians.

Higher blood levels of antioxidant selenium may reduce skin cancer risk by about 60 percent, according to a 2009 study in *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention*. Brazil nuts are nature's richest source of selenium.

Try This:

Place Brazil nuts in a heavy-bottom skillet and cook over medium heat, constantly stirring for 5 minutes or until the nuts are golden brown. Enjoy as a light snack.

Quinoa

Target:

Pancreatic cancer, which has one of the lowest survival rates of all cancers.

A recent study in the *American Journal of Epidemiology* suggests people who consume two or more daily servings of fibre and whole grains such as quinoa have a lower risk of pancreatic cancer than those who consume one or fewer servings.

Try This:

In a saucepan, combine 1 cup (250 mL) apple cider or juice, 1/2 cup (125 mL) quinoa, and 1/2 tsp (2 mL) cinnamon. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until liquid is absorbed, 10 to 15 minutes. Serve as a side dish with meals.

Edamame

Target:

Prostate cancer, the most common cancer in Canadian men.

Edamame are young green soybeans endowed with genistein and daidzein. According to a 2009 study in the journal *Nutrition and Cancer*, these plant-based compounds mimic estrogen, reducing the risk of prostate cancer by up to 30 percent.

Try This:

Prepare 1 cup (250 mL) shelled edamame according to the package directions. Add to blender with 1/4 cup (60 mL) each plain yogurt and tahini, 2 garlic cloves, juice of 1/2 lemon, 1/2 tsp (2 mL) cumin, 1/4 tsp (1 mL) cayenne, salt and pepper to taste. Blend until smooth. Serve with whole grain crackers or crudité.

Green tea

Target:

Lung cancer, the leading cause of cancer death in Canada.

A 2009 analysis conducted by Chinese scientists found two cups of green tea daily reduced the risk of lung cancer by 18 percent. This ancient beverage contains, among others, a mighty cancer-fighting antioxidant, epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG).

Try This:

Allow your green tea to steep for about 5 minutes, so more EGCG ends up in your mug. Sip and enjoy!

Sunflower seeds

Target:

Bladder cancer. Smoking is the number one risk factor for this cancer since cancer-causing chemicals collect in the bladder.

The spice rack can pack serious cancer-fighting punch

- **Black pepper** contains piperine, which may reduce the risk of breast cancer.
- **Cayenne or chili powder** contains capsaicin, which appears to prevent the growth of pancreatic cancer cells.
- **Ginger** contains 6-shogaol, which prevents the proliferation of cancerous lung cells.
- **Turmeric** contains curcumin, found to attack and kill esophageal cancer cells.

A 2010 Australian study reported higher intake of vitamin E (at least 193 mg per day) may reduce the risk of bladder cancer by about 35 percent. Sunflower seeds, along with nuts and vegetable oils, are an excellent source.

Try This:

Add a generous helping of sunflower seeds to oatmeal, coleslaw, salads, baked goods, and yogourt.

Sockeye salmon

Target:

Cancer of the esophagus, more common in men, is particularly deadly. Major risk factors include smoking, acid reflux, and drinking very hot beverages.

Scientists at the International Epidemiology Institute in Maryland discovered individuals who consumed the most vitamin D were less likely to develop esophageal and oral cancers. Sockeye salmon is brimming with the sunshine vitamin as well as omega-3 fat, another tumour tamer.

Try This:

In a large bowl, flake 1 can of sockeye salmon. Add 2 grated carrots. Mix in 2 chopped shallots, 1/2 cup (125 mL) oats, 1 Tbsp (15 mL) Dijon mustard, 2 tsp (10 mL) curry powder, 1 beaten egg, and salt and pepper to taste. Form into 6 equal-sized burger patties. Grill or pan-fry until hot, and serve on whole grain buns.

Broccoli sprouts

Target:

Stomach cancer. A diet high in salty and smoked foods boosts stomach cancer risk.

Broccoli sprouts are a stellar source of sulforaphane. This powerful antioxidant can fight *Helicobacter pylori* stomach infection, a significant risk factor for stomach cancer, says a 2009 study in the journal *Cancer Prevention Research*.

Try This:

For a peppery kick, add broccoli sprouts to sandwiches, salads, and soups.