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## **Amplifying Life**

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### Choose Foods that lower Your Risk of Cancer

The 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines urge all Americans to “consume a healthy eating pattern.” Diets rich in fruits, vegetables and whole grains may offer protection against cancer, heart disease and type 2 diabetes. Healthy eating patterns include choosing healthy options and limiting foods which are linked, through research, to chronic diseases, including saturated fats, trans fats, added sugar and sodium. While there is no guarantee, these food choices can help to reduce the risk.

When considering foods that should be limited, we should choose fewer processed meats, salty foods, sugar-sweetened drinks, full-fat dairy foods, and large portions of red meat. Minimizing these foods, as well as aiming for a healthy weight and physical activity level, are important factors in the body’s fight against cancer and other diseases.

What should we focus on? Whole-grain foods have up to five times more antioxidant (anti-aging at the cell level) activity than do common vegetables, fruits, or white bread. You might have heard the saying to “Make a Colorful Plate” or to “Eat the Colors of the Rainbow.” Each of the color groups of fruits and vegetables have specific health benefits. Brightly colored fruits and vegetables contain many phytonutrients, which appear to protect the body’s cell from damage caused by harmful compounds in foods and the environment.

Eating fruits and vegetables which are RED can help reduce the risk of several cancers, lower blood pressure, improve memory, and provide antioxidants to protect cells from aging. Fruits and vegetables which are DARK ORANGE help to protect against infection, keep eyes and skin healthy, are high in antioxidants which protect cells from damage – including several types of cancer. The fruits and vegetables which are YELLOW/ORANGE help protect age-related vision problems and the risk of prostate cancer.

Eating fruits and vegetables which are YELLOW/GREEN help to maintain eyesight and may reduce the risk of vision problems later in life. DARK GREEN fruits and vegetables may protect against some cancers and are important to eye and heart health. The fruits and vegetables which are BLUE/PURPLE work to slow the growth of colon cancer cells. These can act as anti-cancer agents in the digestive tract. The last color group of WHITE/BROWN fruits and vegetables have a strong anti-cancer growth which help to reduce the risk of colon, breast and prostate cancers.

Healthy food choices and healthy behaviors help to protect us from disease. Eating phytochemicals from foods as part of a healthy diet and not in the form of supplements appear to be the safest and most helpful to our health. This information was taken from a message of Good Health from the Kansas State University Johnson Cancer Research Center and K-State Research and Extension Partnership. For more information on tips for healthy eating, feel free to contact me. Shandi Andres, Flint Hills Extension District, 501 W Main, Council Grove, KS 66846. (620) 767-5136 or [sdandres@ksu.edu](mailto:sdandres@ksu.edu)