



NOV 17 1994

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Leader's Guide: The Diet and Cancer Connection

Adapted by Kathleen M. Stadler*

How does diet influence the development of certain kinds of cancer? This publication is a companion to *Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet*, Home and Garden Bulletins 253-1 to 253-8 and the Food Guide Pyramid.

Purpose _____

The purpose of this publication is to increase understanding of how diet is involved in one of our most costly chronic diseases, cancer. Its main purpose is to help participants learn how to eat a health-promoting diet to reduce their risk for cancer.

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables, with emphasis on vegetables, has been shown to lower the risk of developing certain cancers. Americans are increasing their intakes, but the majority still lag far behind a minimum of five servings each day.

Key Concepts _____

1. An unbalanced diet high in fat and low in certain vitamins, minerals, and other food components including fiber is related to the development of a number of cancers.
2. Eating a varied and balanced diet of nutritious foods is believed to be important in lowering the risk of cancer.

Background Information _____

In this country, cancer is the second leading cause of death with nearly 500,000 deaths annually. About one in every three persons will have cancer sometime during his or her life, and cancer will strike three out of four families. At least one-half of all are believed to be caused or promoted by factors such as diet, tobacco and/or alcohol with diet being the leading factor. For more information, read VCE Publication 348-141, *The Diet and Cancer Connection*.

Materials Needed: _____

- VCE Publication 348-141, *The Diet and Cancer Connection*
- Leaflets on vitamins A, C, E and fiber from the *Good Sources of Nutrients* set
- Leaflets on "Eat a Variety of Food" and "Choose a Diet with Plenty of Vegetables, Fruits, and Grain Products" from the *Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet* set
- Recipes
- Food Guide Pyramid
- *Diet, Nutrition and Cancer* video by American Institute of Cancer Research
- Additional Resources:
For more information about cancer, diet and other factors, ask your county Extension agent for articles about cancer and contributing factors. Also, ask your agent, public health nurse, dietitian or other health professional, and your librarian about other resources or information available. They may have a videotape on diet and cancer that you could borrow.

The American Cancer Society has excellent materials also. Call the Cancer Information Service (1-800-ACS-2345). You may also contact the National Cancer Institute, Building 31, Room 10A18, Bethesda, MD 20205, 1-800-4-CANCER (toll free).

Preparation _____

Plan how you will teach the lesson so that you can obtain the needed resources such as a videotape and copies of publications and leaflets. Assign recipes to people to prepare and bring to the meeting.

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Teaching the Lesson _____

Interest getter: Ask the participants about the kinds of cancer they have heard about. Since cancer is an uncontrolled growth of cells, there can be as many kinds of cancers as there are kinds of cells.

Is it true that anything can cause cancer? No. Tests have been developed that suggest which chemicals are most apt to initiate uncontrolled cell growth. While useful, they are not foolproof and can be inaccurate especially for chemicals in low concentrations.

Introduce the topic: In your words or by reading parts of *The Diet and Cancer Connection*, give a short overview of the topic.

What is cancer? If you have time, ask some questions to encourage discussion. (How many have someone in their families who has had cancer? How prevalent are these problems in your community?)

Teaching Activities _____

Activity #1 Protective Nutrients and Cancer

Purpose: Participants will discover the principal nutrients believed to protect us from cancer, as well as other cancer-fighting substances in foods.

Procedure: Hand out VCE Publication 348-141, *The Diet and Cancer Connection*. View and discuss the video *Diet, Nutrition and Cancer*.

Look for nutrients named in connection with different forms of cancer. Keep a tally of what you find. Example: Vitamin C—Lung cancer, Stomach cancer, etc.

Activity #2 Good Sources of Nutrients

Purpose: Participants will learn food sources of important nutrients and fiber.

Procedure: Provide every person or small group one of the lists of *Good Sources of Nutrients*. Have them plan ways to get at least half of their RDA by eating two or more different foods. Have each person or group report their suggestions.

Activity #3 Tasty Ways to Protect Yourself

Purpose: To introduce some new foods or new ways to prepare familiar foods.

Procedure: Using some of the suggestions in *Dietary Guidelines and Your Diet*, Home and Garden Bulletins 253-1 to 253-8 and other recommended recipes, prepare for tasting a selection of foods high in vitamins and minerals and low in fat that may be unfamiliar to your group. You may wish to plan a meal, asking others to prepare some of the recipes. Discuss important protective nutrients associated with cancer that are in the foods you're eating. Did you include a cruciferous vegetable?

Summary _____

Summarize your main points. See **Key Concepts** on page 1. You can protect yourself against many diseases, including cancer, but the key is a lifetime of tasty, nutritious food. Waiting until disease strikes may be too late and much less effective than a healthful diet throughout life. Yet, even those advanced in years and suffering chronic disease can benefit and may even prevent premature death, hospitalization, or extended care by improving their diets.