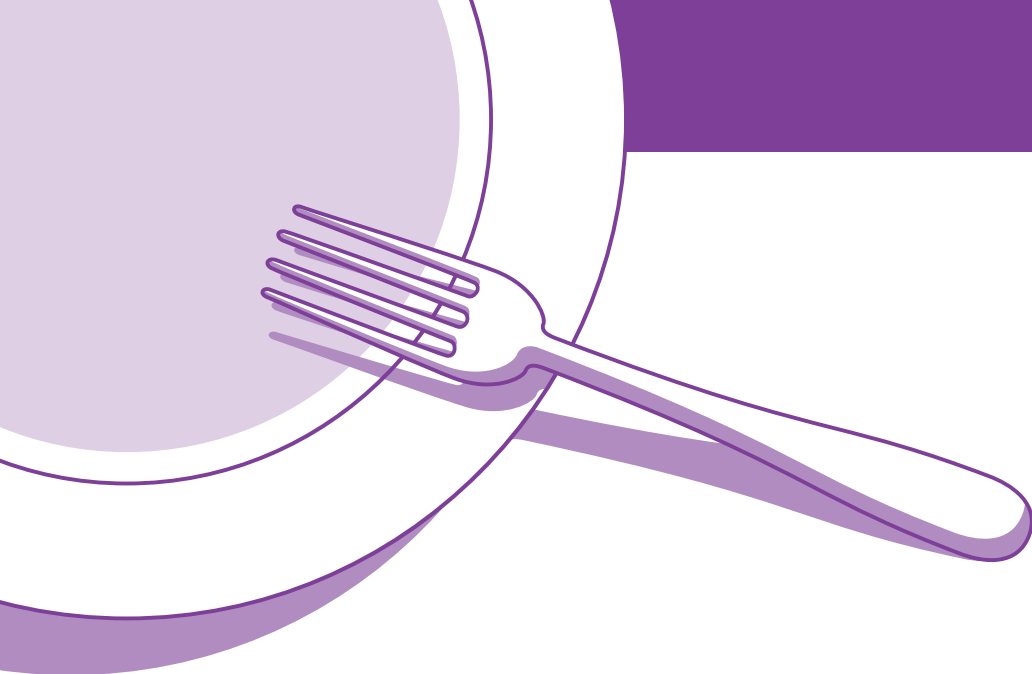


A factual list of cancer-causing foods and cancer-fighting foods





Learn to eat mindfully, understanding the carcinogenic or anti-carcinogenic properties of various foods.

On your mission to better health, you may have come across articles about ‘cancer-fighting superfoods’ and ‘cancer-causing foods’. Unfortunately, these are often unsubstantiated or poorly researched so there is a lot of unreliable information online. So, how can people find reliable information on cancer-related nutrition?

We’re committed to providing you with reliable, substantiated facts so you can make the necessary changes to your lifestyle, from maintaining a healthy diet to kicking unhealthy habits. This article provides information on cancer-causing and cancer-fighting foods that are backed up by research from authoritative sources – such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and Cancer Research UK – so that you can eat mindfully, understanding the carcinogenic or anti-carcinogenic properties of various foods.

Eating the right foods and filling your body with the minerals and nutrients it needs to thrive is not only beneficial for your dental and gut health, but it can also help reduce your chances of developing specific types of cancer.

Cancer-causing foods

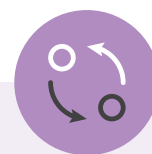
Processed meat

According to the World Health Organization, there is “[convincing evidence](#)” that processed meat causes cancer. Classified as a Group 1 carcinogen, it is connected specifically to colorectal and stomach cancer.

Examples of processed meats that have carcinogenic properties include: Frankfurter hotdogs, ham, sausages, corned beef, beef jerky and canned or lunch meat.

Alternatives:

White fish, white meat such as chicken or turkey, or meat substitutes such as Quorn, tofu or seitan.



Red meat

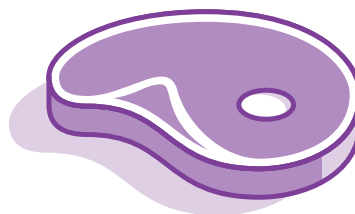
Only marginally better for us than processed meat, red meat is classified as Group 2A, "[probably carcinogenic to humans](#)". The strongest link between eating red meat and cancer is colorectal cancer, however, there is also evidence of links to both pancreatic and prostate cancer.

[Cancer Council](#) recommend that, to reduce your risk of cancer, you should eat no more than 65-100g of cooked red meat per week.

Barbecues and charred meat

"Some research suggests that burnt or charred meat may increase the risk of cancer. Substances called heterocyclic amines are formed in foods that are cooked at high temperatures and blackened or charred. In animal studies, heterocyclic amines are proven to cause cancer. However, the evidence in human studies is not clear."

[Cancer Council](#)



Alternatives:

Swap red meat for beans, pulses, white meat or fish.

Alcohol

Many of us enjoy the occasional drink, some of us more than others. However, the medical advice is to reduce your alcohol intake to as little as possible. Alcohol is classified as a [Group 1 carcinogen](#), which means there is [sufficient evidence](#) of carcinogenicity in humans.

The forms of cancer that are particularly linked to alcohol consumption are cancer of the [mouth, throat, oesophagus, breast, liver, stomach and bowel](#).

The cancer risk associated with alcohol is thought to be [dose dependent](#) in some forms of cancer. That is, consuming one glass of wine with dinner every now and then does not have as much of a negative effect as binge-consuming several units of alcohol in one sitting. In fact, [one study](#) suggests that moderate consumption of red wine can be linked to a lower overall mortality and reduced risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.

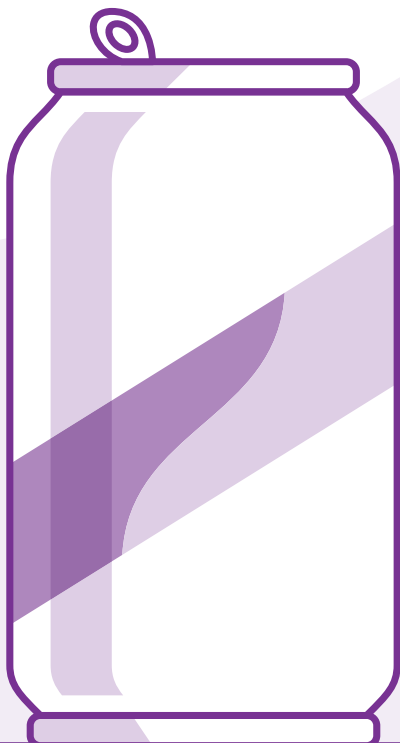


Salted fish (Chinese style)

Salting is a traditional method of preserving food – especially fish – frequently used in South-East Asia and China. This method of preserving unfortunately results in the production of carcinogenic [by-products](#), meaning it can cause cancer in humans. [Chinese-style salted fish](#) is a Group 1 carcinogen, like processed meat.

Alternatives:

Fresh fish or seafood such as prawns, mussels or squid.



Sugary drinks or non-diet soda

Obesity is a major risk factor for [several cancers](#), and as such it is important to maintain a healthy weight. This can be achieved through a balanced diet that incorporates all food groups. If consumed regularly, sugary drinks can lead to weight gain and, in excessive amounts, obesity.

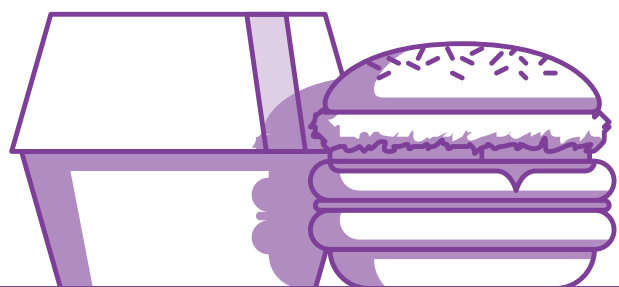
Fast food or processed foods

Greater body fatness is a [cause of many cancers](#). [The World Cancer Research Fund](#) recommends limiting 'fast foods' and other processed foods high in fat, starches or sugars, as this helps control calorie intake and maintain a healthy weight.

Not only can removing or reducing carcinogenic foods in your diet help reduce the risk of cancer, it can help you maintain a healthy weight, improve your focus and aid general well-being. For ideas on how to maintain a healthy diet while you're at work, read [7 healthy eating tips for the office](#).

Alternatives:

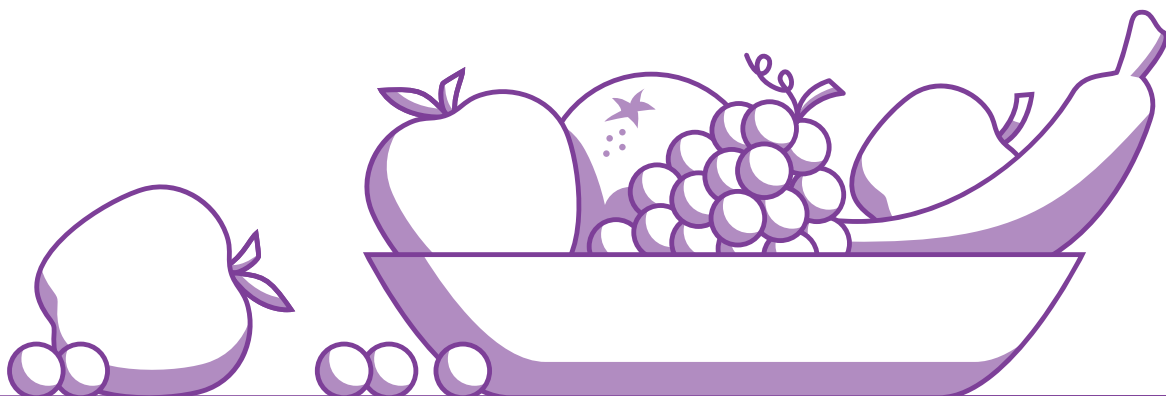
Homemade sandwiches on wholegrain bread, sushi or salads.

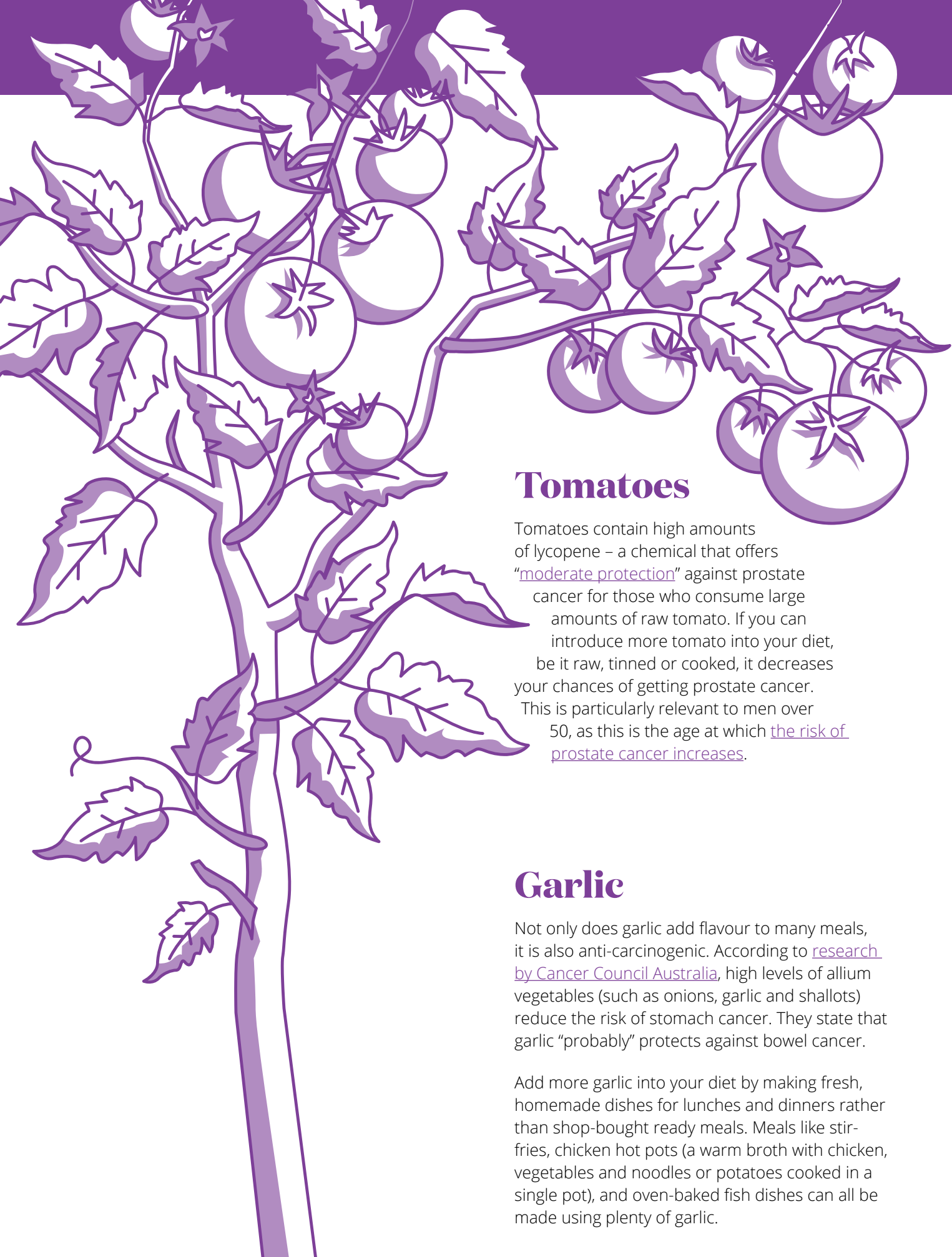


Cancer-fighting foods

Fruit and vegetables

[Cancer Council](#) tell us that fibre-rich diets, which are achieved by eating adequate servings of fruit and vegetables every day, can help prevent [one in six bowel cancer cases](#). Eating the recommended five servings of fruit and veg a day can help to reduce your risk of oesophageal, lung and some forms of mouth and throat cancer.





Tomatoes

Tomatoes contain high amounts of lycopene – a chemical that offers “[moderate protection](#)” against prostate cancer for those who consume large amounts of raw tomato. If you can introduce more tomato into your diet, be it raw, tinned or cooked, it decreases your chances of getting prostate cancer. This is particularly relevant to men over 50, as this is the age at which [the risk of prostate cancer increases](#).

Garlic

Not only does garlic add flavour to many meals, it is also anti-carcinogenic. According to [research by Cancer Council Australia](#), high levels of allium vegetables (such as onions, garlic and shallots) reduce the risk of stomach cancer. They state that garlic “probably” protects against bowel cancer.

Add more garlic into your diet by making fresh, homemade dishes for lunches and dinners rather than shop-bought ready meals. Meals like stir-fries, chicken hot pots (a warm broth with chicken, vegetables and noodles or potatoes cooked in a single pot), and oven-baked fish dishes can all be made using plenty of garlic.

Citrus fruits

Research suggests that citrus intake may significantly reduce risk of oesophageal cancer. A review looking at nine studies also found that a greater intake of citrus fruits was linked to a reduced risk of pancreatic cancer. Another review showed that a high intake of citrus fruit (at least three servings per week) reduced the risk of stomach cancer by 28%. To make sure you're eating enough citrus fruits, try putting lemon slices in your tea, dressing a salad with lime and eating grapefruit for breakfast.

“Eating the right foods is not only beneficial for your dental and gut health, but it can also help reduce your chances of getting specific types of cancer”



Carrots

They may not help you see in the dark, but there is “suggestive evidence” that carrots can in fact, lower the risk of cervical cancer. High in vitamin A and antioxidants, carrots are also high in fibre, which can help keep you regular and minimise the risk of bowel cancer. To make sure you're eating enough carrots, try eating snacks such as carrot sticks and hummus. A quick and tasty snack, they're also easy to eat at your desk or on-the-go.

Wholegrains

There is strong evidence that eating wholegrains helps to protect against colorectal cancer. Wholegrains contain dietary fibre and include brown rice, wholegrain bread, quinoa, spelt, rye and oats. As well as protecting against some types of cancer, they are also known to improve digestion and reduce cholesterol levels.

For those reading a printed version of this PDF, head to aetnainternational.com/en/about-us/explore/fit-for-duty-corporate-wellness to access links to related articles.

Further reading:

For more information on [eating to reduce cancer risk](#), [breast cancer prevention](#), or [how to support a loved one with cancer](#), please read our helpful resources.

[Male breast cancer](#)

[Eat away at your cancer risk](#)

[A doctor talks about the damaging effects of smoking tobacco](#)

[Expatriate health: What to do if you or a loved one gets a cancer diagnosis abroad](#)

[A tale of two worlds: Cancer in the developed and developing world](#)

[Breast cancer prevention: How you can reduce your risk of breast cancer](#)

[Practical and emotional tips for supporting a loved one with cancer](#)

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