

12 Foods That May Boost Your Ability to Fight Breast Cancer

This Easy Shopping List Could Fight Cancer



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Can you help prevent breast cancer through a healthy diet? Making good choices at the grocery store isn't a magic bullet, but research suggests it may help. In fact, an [article published in the American Society of Clinical Oncology 2015 Education Book](#) estimated that changes to eating and exercise habits could prevent 25 to 30 percent of cases of breast cancer. And while there's no official consensus yet on the specific foods a cancer-prevention diet should include — or how much of those foods you should eat — diets full of whole grains, fiber, and fruits and vegetables have been linked to reduced risk.

More and more research is being done to figure out just what it is in these foods that prevents or slows the growth of the disease. It may be, for example, that antioxidants and compounds called phytochemicals in plants have protective powers against [the cell damage that can lead to breast cancer](#). Some solid evidence points to carotenoids, otherwise known as the pigments that give carrots, tomatoes, and cantaloupe their bright red and orange colors, as being beneficial. Chemicals in cruciferous vegetables — think crunchy, fiber-filled broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage — may also help.

What's agreed on by researchers so far is that obesity can be a risk for breast cancer, as can a sedentary

lifestyle. Alcohol consumption should be limited, too: In more than 100 studies, excessive drinking has been consistently associated with an increased risk.

And experts recommend against using supplements as a nutrition shortcut. They won't give you the benefits that actual foods will; in fact, they may sometimes interact harmfully with certain drugs.

In the end, exercise and diet may even play a greater role than weight management in [breast cancer](#) prevention. “Overweight women who exercise 150 minutes a week and eat lots of fruits and veggies have a lower risk of breast cancer than normal-weight women who are sedentary and have a low intake of fruits and veggies,” says nutritionist [Mary Marian, RDN](#), assistant professor of practice and director of the didactic program of dietetics at the University of Arizona in Tucson. She recommends careful shopping in the produce section, seafood department, and spice aisle to help you create an anti-cancer nutrition plan.

The following foods, in particular, offer nutrients that may promote better breast health and boost your immune system.

Turmeric Puts Up a Fight Against Inflammation



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The spice that gives curry its beautiful yellow color contains a chemical called curcumin. The research on this compound is inconclusive, but lab studies have shown that curcumin supplements could play a role in helping fight breast cancer tumors when combined with certain [drug-based therapy](#).

On the other hand, some research suggests it might interfere with chemotherapy, so be sure to talk to your doctor before incorporating it into your diet during treatment.

It also may have an anti-inflammatory effect that could protect your overall health. You'll need supplements to get enough curcumin, but putting a [veggie curry](#) full of broccoli, onions, and garlic on your breast cancer prevention menu could help make your anti-cancer nutrition plan more fun.

Go Green and Crunchy With Broccoli to Slow Tumor Growth





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Broccoli has garnered the most attention as a breast cancer prevention food, and research has shown it **blocks tumor growth**, explains Marian, preventing the further spread of cancer if it does occur. You can also get this anti-cancer benefit from other cruciferous veggies — including cauliflower, cabbage, Brussels sprouts, and kale — but you most likely need to eat one or more of these vegetables every day, she advises.

Garlic and Onions Get Down to the Cellular Level



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“Garlic seems to have an impact on cell cycling,” explains Marian. That’s the process that is not functioning properly when a healthy cell becomes cancerous and grows uncontrolled. Credit for regulating this goes to the component of garlic called allyl sulfide. Allyl sulfides are found throughout the onion family, so adding garlic or onions to your recipes on a regular basis may aid in breast cancer prevention.

People on blood thinners and certain other drugs should talk with their doctor before taking garlic supplements,

to avoid possible drug interactions.

An Apple a Day Really Might Keep the Doctor Away

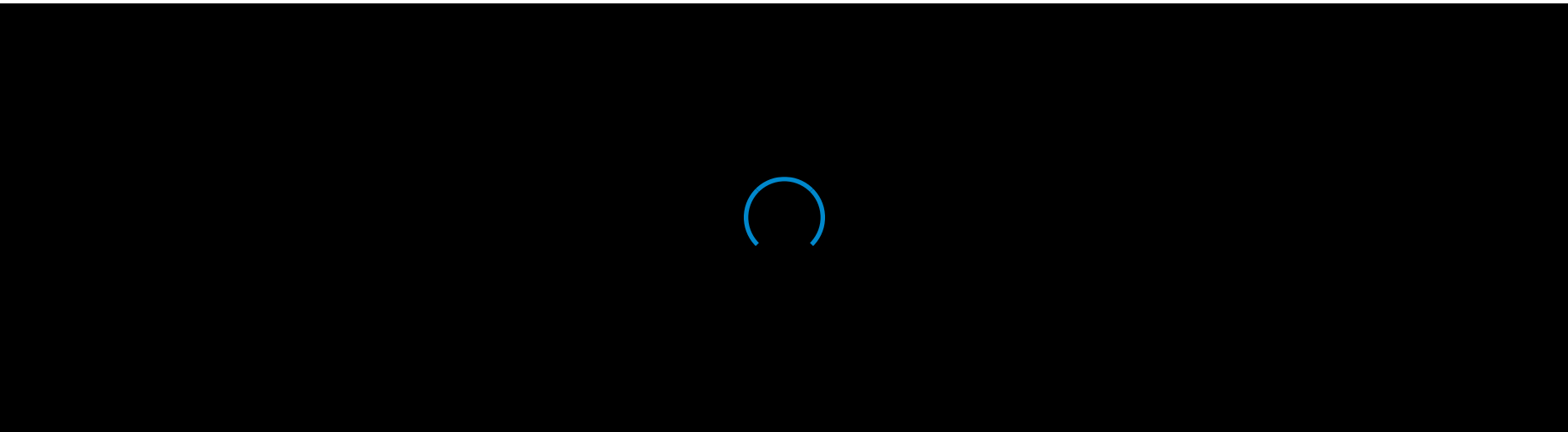


Babett Lupanieszku/Stocksy

There may be something to this old saying, but there’s a catch. If you normally peel your apple and toss away the colorful wrapping, you’re also tossing away [a rich source of antioxidants, fiber, and other compounds](#) needed for anti-cancer nutrition. Lab studies suggest that apple peel can actually fight the [spread of cancer cells](#).

The good news is that you don’t need exotic varieties — this research used readily available Red Delicious apples, so add them to your breast cancer prevention shopping list.

Pomegranates May Pack a Powerful, Juicy Punch

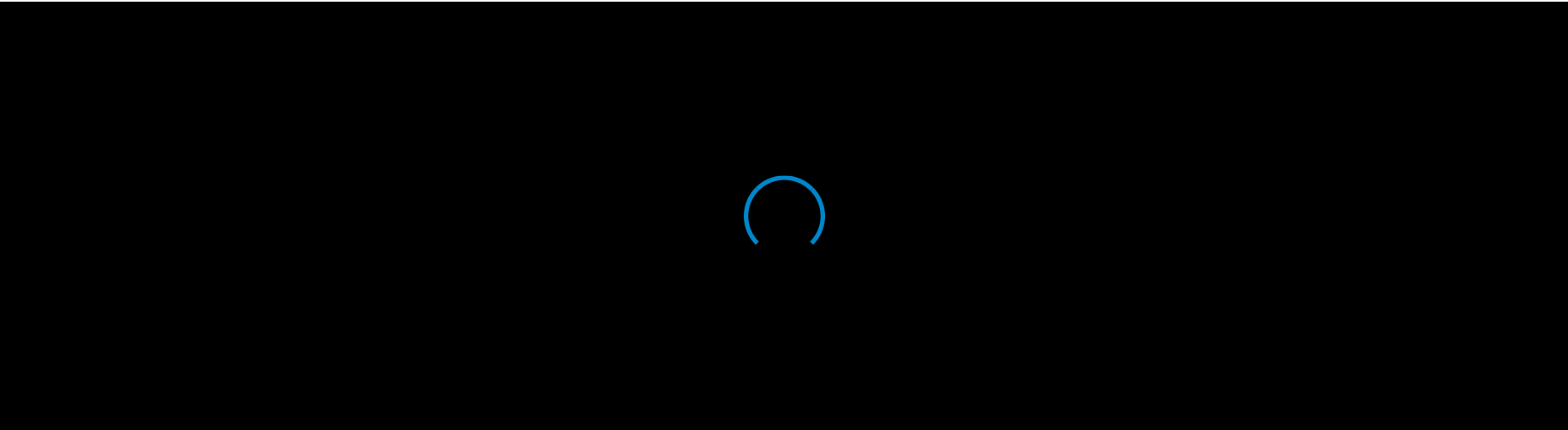


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More investigation needs to be done on the role of pomegranates, but research, such as a [study published in June 2015 in the journal Oxidative Medicine and Cellular Longevity](#), has suggested that the fruit contains a compound that might help fight cancer’s growth — especially estrogen-dependent cancers.

Pomegranates make a delicious and healthy addition to any breast cancer management plan or breast cancer prevention diet, whether in fruit or juice form. Adding them to your grocery list could benefit others in your family, too — they may also help fight [heart disease](#) and [prostate cancer](#). Still, the juice may interact with cholesterol-lowering drugs, so ask your doctor about the risks.

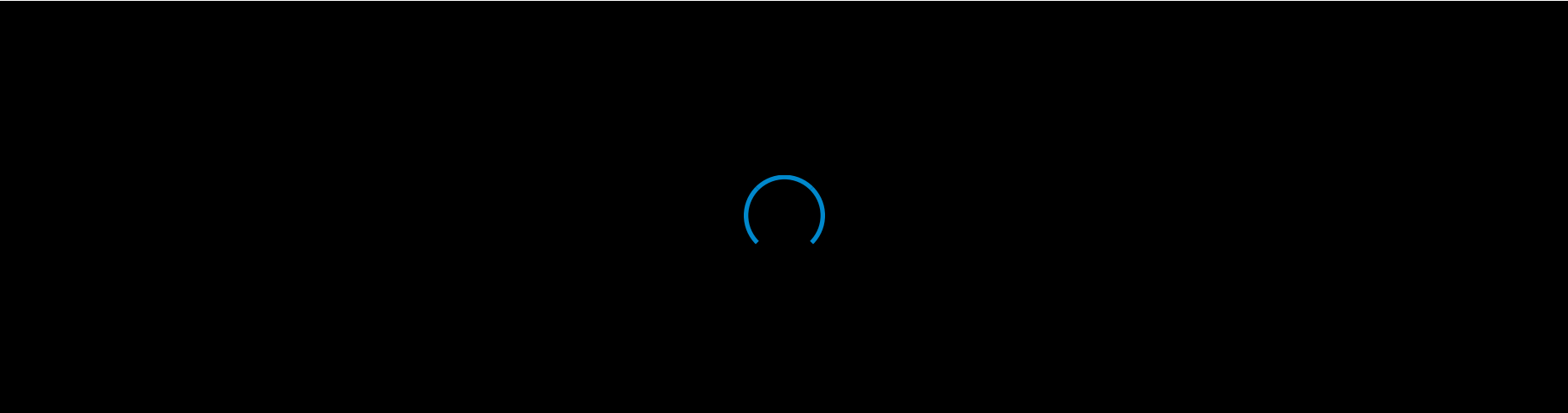
Get Out Your Nut Cracker and Tame Tumors With Walnuts



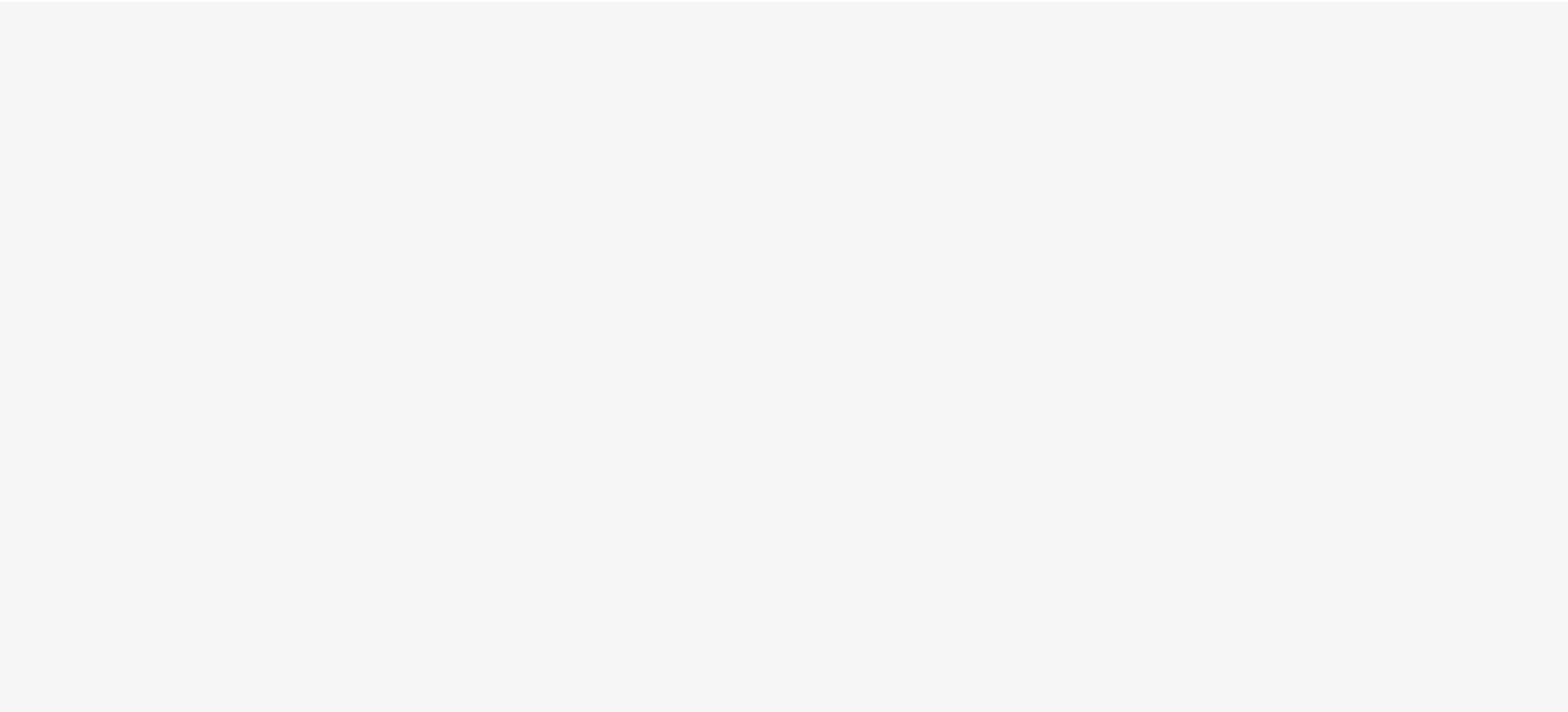
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Walnuts contain many nutrients and [healthy omega-3 fatty acids](#), which may help your body fight inflammation. Research also suggests that walnuts may actually slow the growth of [breast cancer tumors in mice](#), so this nut could be a helpful [addition to your meals](#).

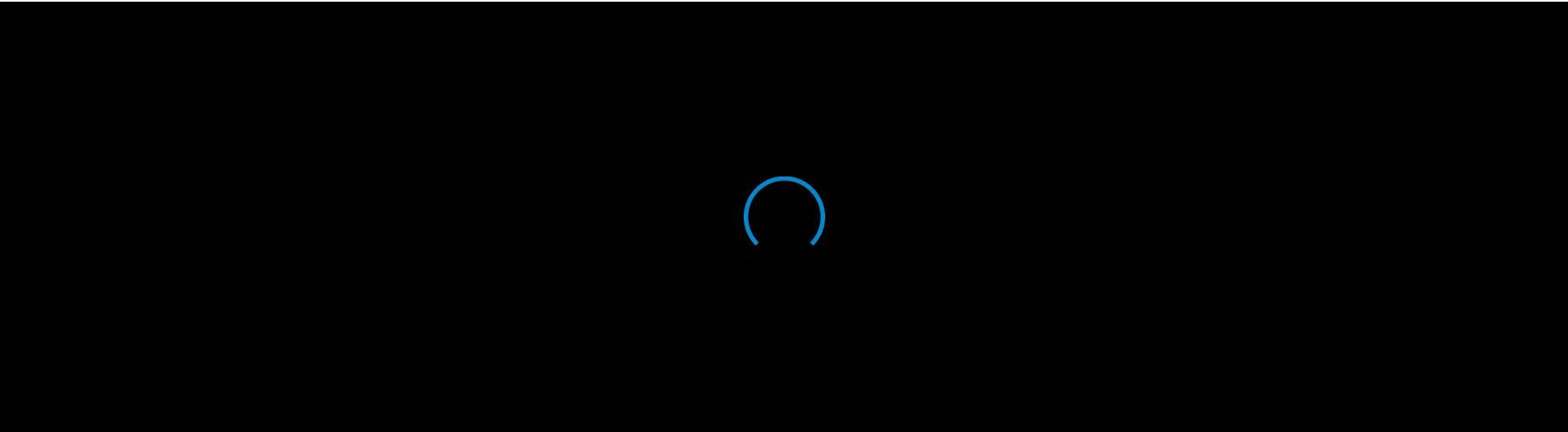
Fish Can Fill You With Protective Lean Protein



Fish is a great source of omega-3 fatty acids. That makes it a smart lean [protein](#) source — and a great addition to a breast cancer prevention plan, because anti-cancer nutrition recommendations suggest [limiting your intake of red meat and processed meats](#), including bacon and packaged deli meats. Opt for salmon, mackerel, sardines, and tuna — all are rich in omega-3s — as breast cancer diet choices instead.



Flaxseeds, Ground or Whole, Could Fend Off Cancer



Crystal Cartier/Getty Images

Shopping for healthy fats will inevitably lead you to flaxseed oil, but this is an instance when your best anti-cancer nutrition choice is the seed itself, ground into a flour-like dust.

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“When you use milled flaxseed, it has a component called lignans,” explains Marian. According to a [study published in June 2014 in Applied Physiology, Nutrition, and Metabolism](#), lignans may possibly decrease cancer growth, which could make it useful in a [breast cancer management diet](#). You can buy ground flaxseed or grind the seeds yourself using a coffee grinder. Then sprinkle the flaxseed on salads or include it in muffins.

Soy Foods — Not Soy Products — May Bring Benefits

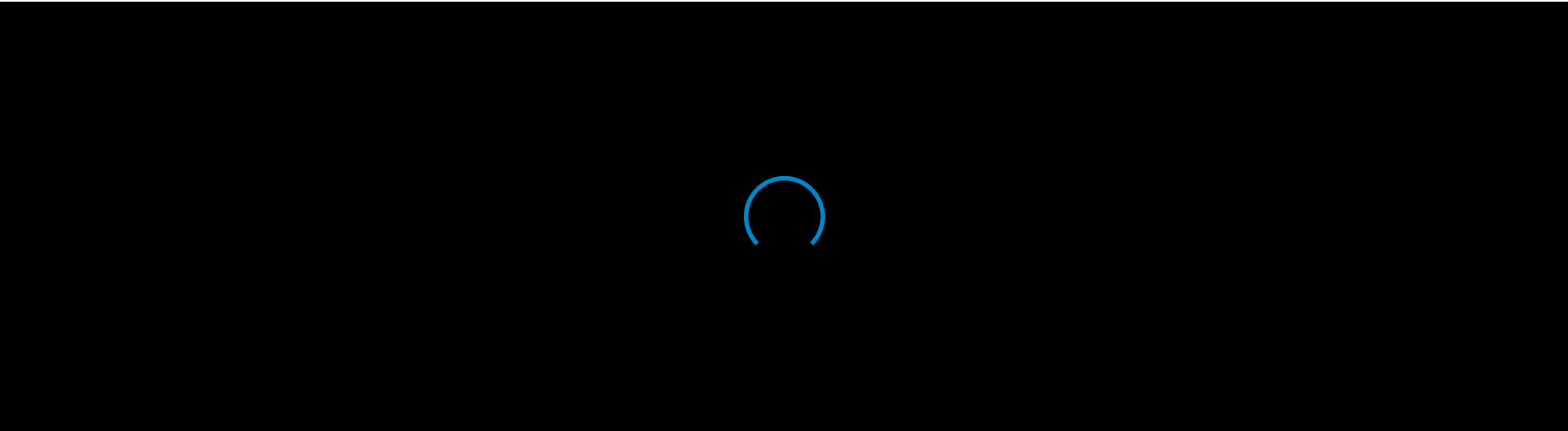


Masterfile

[Soy has received mixed reviews](#) regarding adult breast cancer prevention, but Marian says mothers may be interested to know about a large study of Asian-American women that found when adolescent girls ate at least one serving of soy foods a day, [they reaped anti-cancer nutrition benefits later in life](#).

On the other hand, she recommends against adult women taking soy or isoflavone supplements as part of a breast cancer diet. These products contain estrogen-like compounds, which could prove to be too much of a good thing.

Brightly Colored Fruits and Vegetables Are Allies

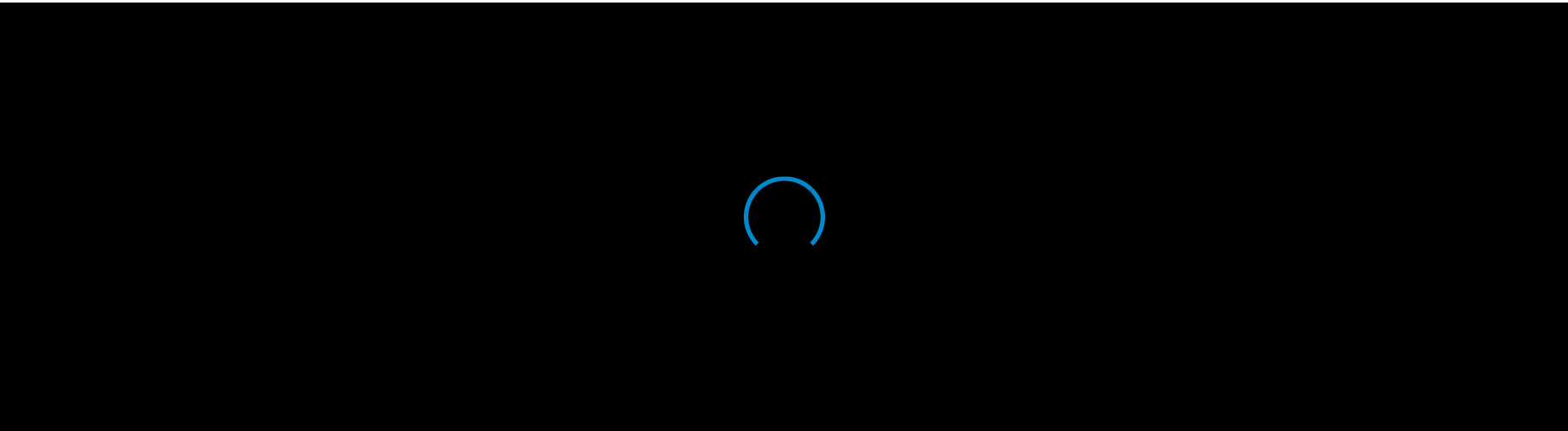


Nadine Greeff/Stocksy

When it comes to breast cancer prevention, think about eating more carrots, cantaloupe, and sweet potatoes — foods rich in the compounds known as carotenoids. According to an [article published in June 2015 in The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition](#), women who have higher levels of carotenoids in their bloodstream seem to be at lower risk for breast cancer.

Orange vegetables and fruits are most often held up as sources of this powerful nutrient, so if you want to amp up the carotenoids in your breast cancer diet, just make sure you get lots of orange, red, yellow, and even dark green foods.

Berries Make Small But Mighty Cancer Foes



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Blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and strawberries add color, variety, and flavor to your anti-cancer nutrition plan. They're power-packed with anti-inflammatory and antioxidant compounds that could aid in breast cancer prevention, so make them part of your breast cancer diet. According to a [study published in December 2016 in the journal Antioxidants](#), blueberries and blackberries in particular may play a role in reducing the growth of tumors and breast cancer cells.

Green Tea Can Soothe Your Mind and Protect Your Cells



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Green tea and white tea both contain catechins, chemicals that seem to show some benefit in breast cancer prevention. [Research published in August 2016 in the journal Nutrients](#) suggests that green tea may be effective at slowing tumor growth and influencing other biological processes that contribute to breast cancer. But, says

Marian, you might have to drink a lot of tea — four or more cups a day — to achieve this effect.