

# Can Chocolate Cure Cancer?

All sorts of foods are regularly touted as a cure for mankind's ills. But which ones really can help protect against cancer?

The role diet plays in increasing or decreasing the risk of cancer has been the focus of considerable attention by scientists – and the media – for many years.

Hardly a week goes by without a food being heralded as cancer-beating, only for the claims to be refuted a week later! To help make sense of it all, a team of experts from the highly-regarded World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) has now studied the research looking at the links between diet and cancer.

“For maximum cancer protection, we recommend a

plant-based diet, with at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day, as well as pulses, such as beans and lentils, and roots, such as potatoes and sweet potatoes,” says Dr Rachel Thompson, Deputy Head of Science at the WCRF.

which is important as maintaining a healthy weight is one of the best ways of reducing the cancer risk.

“Weight gain can lead to cancer so consider high-calorie, fattening food, including sugary drinks, fried foods, cakes, biscuits and

permitted. “However, try limiting red meat to 500 grams a week – and try to avoid processed meats such as bacon,” advises Dr Thompson.

What about those foods which are touted as helping to decrease the cancer risk,

## At least two thirds of your plate should contain plant-based food like salad

“We also recommend fibre-rich wholegrain cereals, bread, pasta and rice. As well as helping prevent bowel cancer, fibre fills you up so you're less likely to overeat,

burgers, as treats rather than everyday foods.”

Although the WCRF advocates a plant-based diet, small portions of chicken, lean meat and fish are

such as dark chocolate? “I'm afraid we were unable to find any evidence that chocolate prevents cancer,” admits Dr Thompson. “And, even if chocolate did provide a degree of protection, the beneficial aspects would be outweighed by all the sugar and fat it contains.”

Dr Thompson stresses that drinking any alcohol, regardless of whether it's in wine, beer or spirits, increases the risk of cancer.

“In theory, there are some chemicals in red wine that might reduce the cancer risk but the only proven health benefits of wine are associated with heart disease and that's only for small amounts of wine. We recommend limiting alcohol consumption to two drinks a day for a man, and just one for a woman.”

Berries, and especially blueberries, are regularly



### THE COUNTRY CONUNDRUM

#### CHINA

China's low cancer rate may well be linked to the fact the Chinese diet focuses on rice and vegetables, with only small amounts of fish or meat. Recent research has also suggested that one of the reasons breast cancer is less common in neighbouring countries such as Japan is because Japanese women are less likely to be overweight.

#### THE MED

People living in countries near the Mediterranean usually eat lots of fruit, vegetables and garlic, which may explain why these countries have lower cancer rates than the UK.



For information about the World Cancer Research Fund, visit [www.wcrf-uk.org](http://www.wcrf-uk.org) or ☎ 020 7343 4205.

How healthy is your snack?

### All In A Day's Eating

Your choices at mealtimes might help to reduce your risk of developing cancer. Boost your daily intake of cancer-busting foods with these menu ideas...

**BREAKFAST** Porridge with warm fruit compote or eggs florentine (poached eggs and spinach on wholemeal toast), or Kedgeree

**LUNCH** Chicken and salad sandwich on granary bread, or leek and potato soup and a wholemeal roll, or couscous and vegetable salad

**DINNER** Oven-roasted salmon with boiled new potatoes and green vegetables, or a mushroom risotto with a mixed salad, or pasta with roasted pepper, butternut squash and cherry tomatoes

**SNACKS** A piece of fresh fruit, or a handful of dried fruit or oatcakes with reduced fat humous

For more health-promoting menu ideas, visit [www.wcrf-uk.org/cancer\\_prevention/healthy\\_recipes](http://www.wcrf-uk.org/cancer_prevention/healthy_recipes)

