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Prostate Health & Diet

Prostate cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer amongst Canadian men – almost 25% of new cancer cases each year, but making healthy lifestyle choices can help reduce the risk.

The link between prostate health and diet is not yet well-understood, but what is known is that the typical "western" diet, high in the consumption of meat, is associated with a higher incidence of prostate cancer – particularly the aggressive forms. A 2-year study is underway in the U.S. to look at the impact of what men eat, doubling the daily servings of vegetables and including daily whole grains/legumes. Stay tuned!

Can certain foods reduce PSA levels?

British researchers have looked at extracts of some very specific foods for their ability to manage prostate cancer: broccoli, pomegranate, green tea and turmeric. The results are promising – a 63% reduction in PSA levels (a marker of prostate cancer). Caution is urged since previously tested "extracts" (such as lycopene) were not exactly helpful when taken as "supplements." Generally, whole foods are best.

Too much of a good thing?

Certain components of foods are associated with significant health benefits, for example, omega-3 fatty acids. They have demonstrated cardiovascular improvements and have been suggested as helpful for everything from arthritis to dementia to hot flashes. However, evidence is emerging that suggests high blood levels of omega-3s are associated with increased risk of prostate cancer. Be extra judicious if supplementing.

Know the signs!

The prostate can be enlarged without being cancerous – termed benign prostatic hypertrophy (BPH). This condition is associated with older men, but the enlargement can begin in the 20s. Signs include frequent need to urinate, dribbling/leaking urine, weak/hesitant urine stream and incomplete bladder emptying. If you experience these symptoms, talk to your doctor. There are therapies available to help.

Don't suffer in silence! Talk to your pharmacist for tips on managing your prostate symptoms – bladder training exercises, food/drink suggestions, and relaxation techniques. Every bit helps.