

PATRICIA HAUSMAN

FOODS

THAT

FIGHT

CANCER

A DIET AND VITAMIN

PROGRAM THAT PROTECTS

THE ENTIRE FAMILY

Foods That Fight Cancer

A Diet and Vitamin
Program that
Protects the
Entire Family

by Patricia Hausman

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A NOTE TO THE READER

This book is based on mounting scientific research linking certain foods to reduced risk of cancer. On the basis of research now available, the author, along with other health professionals, believes that following the recommendations in the book will reduce most people's risk of developing certain forms of cancer. There is no assurance, however, that following these recommendations will prevent cancer in any individual.

Since some people will not tolerate a diet that would be helpful for most, the author urges the reader to consult a physician before making a major change in diet. Of course, anyone who has been diagnosed as suffering from cancer or any other condition should follow the treatment prescribed by a physician. The recommendations in this book are intended as preventive measures, not as a treatment for cancer patients.

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Patricia Hausman
Silver Spring, Maryland
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1

Good News at Last!

The science of nutrition has come of age. We now know that good nutrition safeguards our health in ways we never dreamed were possible.

A few years ago, I would not have told you that good nutrition would help protect you from cancer. My fellow nutritionists would have laughed at me. My professors at the University of Maryland would have wished that they had never granted me a master's degree in nutrition.

But today, I can tell you that, in my opinion, some simple changes in your diet may very well reduce your chances of developing some forms of cancer. I can show you the scientific research to back my claims. And I doubt that my professors are laughing. They are probably as fascinated as I am by the findings that I am going to tell you about in this book.

A Major Change in Outlook

Most nutritionists will admit that their ideas about diet and health have changed dramatically during the

past ten years. I know that mine have. Twelve years ago, when I first began studying nutrition, I revered animal foods, with their high levels of protein, vitamins, and minerals. I didn't have anything against fruits and vegetables, but I was not especially impressed with them. Animal foods, after all, were richer in nutrients.

In 1975, when I became editor of *Nutrition Action* at the Center for Science in the Public Interest, my main concerns were food additives, sugar, and refined grains. At that time, if I heard the words "nutrition" and "cancer" in the same sentence, I would have thought of food additives.

My bible in those days was the *Recommended Dietary Allowances*. It is a book that discusses common nutrients and gives recommended levels of them. These levels, if eaten daily, should meet the needs of most people.

But as I continued to read the latest findings in my field, my opinions started to change.

The first major change in my thinking related to the fat in our diet. It was clear to me that fat was a far bigger problem than sugar or food additives. I saw overwhelming evidence that saturated fats and cholesterol help to cause heart disease.

I also became convinced that salt was a bigger problem than sugar and food additives. It is obvious that salt contributes to high blood pressure. And high blood pressure greatly increases the chances of heart disease.

The Recommended Dietary Allowances Miss the Boat

In 1978, the congressional Subcommittee on Domestic and International Scientific Planning, Analysis and Cooperation asked me to testify at a hearing on the adequacy of the Recommended Dietary Allowances

(RDA). At the hearing, I criticized the RDA for neglecting the problems of excessive fat and salt in the diet. I insisted that the RDAs are outdated.

Worse still, I explained, the RDAs can be misleading. The RDA approach to nutrition rewards foods rich in protein, vitamins, and minerals, without any thought about their fat or salt content. As a result, high-fat and high-salt foods that cause our most serious health problems often appear to be the best foods for our health because they have lots of protein and other nutrients.

My concerns about fat were the subject of my first book, *Jack Sprat's Legacy: The Science and Politics of Fat and Cholesterol*.

Fat was also the subject of my first writings on nutrition and cancer. In 1980, I presented a review of more than fifty studies on this subject to the Committee on Diet, Nutrition, and Cancer of the National Academy of Sciences. (I will be telling you all about the committee's conclusions throughout this book.) I was convinced that lowering fat intake would reduce our nation's high rates of breast and colon cancer. But fat was the only aspect of our diet that I felt played a role in causing cancer.

On each of these occasions, I received letters and phone calls from people who could not believe that it was the same Patricia Hausman talking. But none of them could convince me to go back to my earlier beliefs. I realized just how much my convictions had changed.

Many Aspects of Diet Can Help Prevent Cancer

Today, I look back at that testimony about the RDAs, my paper on fat and cancer, and my first book, and say that these writings, too, are outdated. Fat and salt are

still serious problems. But only recently did I realize that there are new issues in nutrition that are just as important as eating less fat and salt.

These new issues pertain to nutrition and cancer. And for a pleasant change, the most important of these new issues relate to substances in food that can protect against cancer. I, too, was growing weary of all the warnings about the latest cancer-causing chemical in food. But relief is in sight. Instead of hearing only negatives, *we will be hearing more about findings that link certain foods to prevention of cancer.*

Already there are good research studies showing that some foods have anti-cancer potential. Stay tuned and I will tell you about them.

The Bright Future Ahead

It has been more than four decades since Congress passed the National Cancer Institute Act. That act created the National Cancer Institute and made cancer a major topic of medical research.

For many years, the war against cancer was a frustrating one; the hoped-for breakthrough that would do for cancer what penicillin did for infections seemed ever further away.

Finally, there is reason for hope. "Most common cancers are potentially preventable," concluded the blue-ribbon Committee on Diet, Nutrition and Cancer of the National Academy of Sciences in June of 1982. The committee went on to say that most common forms of cancer "appear to be determined more by habit, diet, and custom than by genetic differences."

The committee declined to say precisely how much cancer can be prevented by changes in diet. But in a report prepared for Congress's Office of Technology Assessment, two well-known cancer experts made some

rough estimates. They ventured that changes in diet *might reduce U.S. cancer rates by 35 percent.*

This book will help you design a diet for yourself that allows you to take advantage of the research that led to these scientists' conclusions.

Diet May Help Prevent Ten Forms of Cancer

There are many different kinds of cancer, of course. I, as well as many of my colleagues, believe that good nutrition can help to prevent many though not all of them. In this book, we'll be talking about the things that you can do to protect yourself from those cancers that are sensitive to diet.

The Committee on Diet, Nutrition, and Cancer cited the following cancers as among those that may be prevented by good nutrition:

- breast cancer—the form of cancer most common among American women
- colon cancer—a form that is very common in both sexes
- lung cancer—the most common type of cancer in American men

The Committee also found evidence that diet may also help prevent at least seven other forms of cancer: cancers of the mouth and throat, esophagus, stomach, prostate, ovary, uterus, and rectum.

Help for Smokers and Gourmets

I would like to point out to you a very positive aspect of the relationship between nutrition and cancer. Most of us have found it difficult—if not impossible—to do

what is best for our health at all times. Thousands of people, for instance, have tried to stop smoking—without success. They are probably tired of hearing only the “stop smoking” message.

Of course, those who urge smokers to stop are absolutely right. There is no better way to prevent lung cancer than to kick the habit. But research now shows that smokers who eat diets rich in vitamin A are less likely to have lung cancer than smokers who do not. In other words, a diet high in vitamin A seems to be helping those who cannot seem to part with their cigarettes.

Don't get me wrong. I am not telling you that eating lots of fruits and vegetables makes smoking okay. But the evidence is good that it helps protect smokers to some degree.

Since I am known mostly for my work on fat and cholesterol, I often hear people complain that high-fat foods taste too good to pass up. (Actually, I advocate eating *less* fat, not none at all.) But I know health-minded people who are also gourmet cooks. Parting with high-fat foods is sometimes more than they are willing to do.

Again, I will not tell you that a high-fiber diet can do away with all the risks posed by a diet rich in fat. But there is evidence that fiber does counteract the ill effects of fat to some degree. For the most part, colon cancer is the issue here. Fat promotes this form of cancer. But I think that certain high-fiber foods can undo some of the damage. In the chapter on fiber, I will tell you why.

Cured meats are another popular food that some people cannot bear to give up. In college, I had a roommate who insisted that she could not live without bacon. She knew all about the reports that cooked bacon often contained trouble-makers called nitrosamines. Tiny