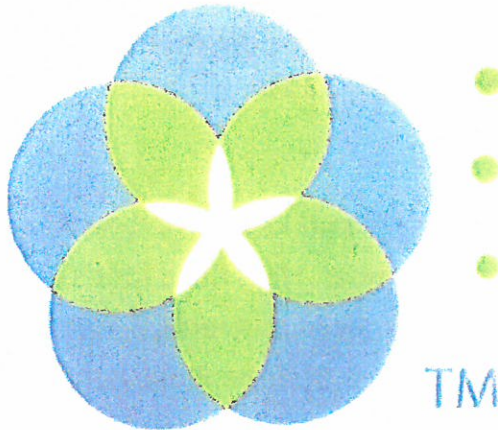


Flaxseed contains three components that may protect against cancer.



- **Lignans**
- **Fibre**
- **Omega-3 Fats**

Flaxseed and Cancer

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, cancer is the leading cause of death in Canada responsible for 30% of all deaths. An estimated 196,900 new cases of cancer and 78,000 deaths from cancer will occur in Canada every year.

Lung, breast, colorectal and prostate cancer are the most common types of cancer in Canada.

- These cancers account for over half (51%) of all new cancer cases.
- Lung cancer accounts for 14% of all new cases of cancer.
- Breast cancer accounts for about one-quarter (26%) of all new cancer cases in women.
- Colorectal cancer accounts for 13% of all new cancer cases.
- Prostate cancer accounts for about one-quarter (24%) of all new cancer cases in men.

These are sobering statistics and although there are many known risk factors for cancer there are steps to reducing these risks. Specifically, the Canadian Cancer Society recommends the following to reduce the risk of developing cancer:

- Being a non-smoker and avoiding second-hand smoke.
- Keeping a healthy body weight.

- Being active and eating well.
- Limiting alcohol. The less you drink, the more you reduce your risk.
- Protecting your skin. Be safe in the sun and don't use tanning beds or lamps.

What is Flaxseed Role in Preventing Cancer?

Flaxseed contains three components that may protect against cancer. These components are fiber, lignans, and omega-3 fats.

Dietary Fibre

Fibre is important for good digestive system health and keeps the bowels regular. High fibre food decreases the risk of colorectal cancer. High fibre foods include fruits and vegetables, whole grains, pulses (beans, peas and lentils), nuts and seeds (including flaxseed). Flaxseed is a good source of fibre. Fibre-rich foods can also help you feel full and may help contribute to a healthy bodyweight which reduces cancer risk.

Lignans

Lignans are phytoestrogens, a weak form of estrogen that may slow down cancers that depend on estrogen to grow, such as breast cancer. A recent study has shown that in menopausal women, a small serving of flaxseed (a teaspoon) was enough to lower breast cancer risk. Other studies show that for younger women who have not gone through menopause, flaxseed also reduces the risk of breast cancer and slows down the growth of certain types of breast cancer.

Omega-3 Fats

Omega-3 fats contain anti-inflammatory properties. In animal studies, flaxseed and flaxseed oil decrease markers of inflammation, decrease number and size of colon cancer tumors, and inhibit growth and spread of prostate cancer. Results are promising but this has not been well-studied in humans – future studies are needed.

In conclusion, flaxseed, in combination with other healthy lifestyle practices, can play a role to reduce the risk of cancer. Your body gets more benefit from ground flaxseed as grinding the flaxseed breaks up the hard seed coat releasing nutrients and soluble fibre. Flaxseeds are easy to grind at home using a coffee grinder, food processor or blender. You also can buy ground flaxseed in most stores.

1. Canadian Cancer Society. <http://www.cancer.ca> (<http://www.cancer.ca/en/?region=ab>)

2. HealthyFlax.org. Flaxseed in Cancer Reduction.
http://www.healthyflax.org/quadrant/media/files/pdf/HEAL.factsheet_NUTRIENT.pdf
(http://www.healthyflax.org/quadrant/media/files/pdf/HEAL.factsheet_NUTRIENT.pdf)

3. American Institute for Cancer Research. Foods that Fight Cancer – Flaxseed.
<http://www.aicr.org/foods-that-fight-cancer/flaxseed.html>
(<http://www.aicr.org/foods-that-fight-cancer/flaxseed.html>)

Does flaxseed reduce the risk of cancer?

A: Flaxseed is the richest source of lignans, a type of phytoestrogen that have cancer preventative properties. Prostate and breast cancer are leading types of cancer in men and women, respectively. Sex hormones (estrogen and testosterone) play important roles in the development and spread of these cancers. Lignans can beneficially alter the activity of estrogen and testosterone in our bodies to help reduce the risk of hormone-related cancers. The antioxidant properties of lignans can also reduce inflammation. Inflammation is to cancer like fuel is to fire. The omega 3s in flaxseed also may provide anti-inflammatory effects. Regular consumption of flaxseed increases dietary fibre intake. Diets high in fibre are associated with reduced risk of death due to cancer. For individuals diagnosed with cancer, flaxseed does not appear to interact with drug therapy.



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