



American  
Institute for  
Cancer  
Research®

# AICR

the newsletter

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*From Marilyn Gentry*

Established in 2001, AICR's Marilyn Gentry Fellowship is a research program that supports emerging leaders in the field of diet, nutrition and cancer.

I am pleased to share that the current fellowship grant recipient is Dr. Kristin Altwegg, PhD. Her research will explore how GLP-1 medications and lifestyle interventions may help reduce the risk of obesity-related cancers and help guide future prevention strategies. You can read more about Dr. Altwegg's research on page 8.

Also in this issue, we take a closer look at emerging topics in nutrition. On page 4, you can read an overview of the new Dietary Guidelines for Americans and how they align and differ from AICR's nutrition advice. On page 7, we take a closer look at seed oils and whether they are helpful or harmful in your diet.

I hope you enjoy this newsletter and continue to support AICR on its mission to fund research that examines cancer prevention and survivorship.



# FREE Publications from AICR

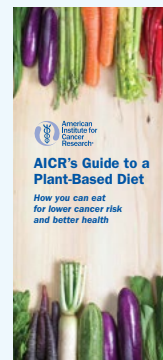
## COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES IN CANCER CARE ▶

explains how complementary therapies such as nutrition and physical activity work alongside conventional cancer treatment.



## AICR'S GUIDE TO A PLANT-BASED DIET ▶

explores the wide range of whole grains, vegetables, fruits, pulses and other plant foods that AICR recommends for lowering cancer risk.



## THE CANCER FIGHTERS IN YOUR FOOD ▶

sums up the latest information about cancer-fighting compounds in plant foods.



## PERSONAL FAMILY & FINANCIAL RECORD BOOK ▶

is a free 48-page book to help you record financial details so loved ones can sort out your estate and carry out your wishes.



**LIMITED QUANTITIES—ORDER TODAY!** Your support makes AICR's life-saving research and education possible, so any gift will be greatly appreciated.

1. By phone: 1-800-843-8114
2. By mail: AICR, PO Box 97167, Washington, DC 20090-7167

## AICR IN THE NEWS



**26.2 MILES THAT MATTER.** AICR is proud to be an official charity partner of the 2026 Marine Corps Marathon, welcoming runners of all experience levels to an iconic course through Washington, DC. Join Team AICR and run with purpose—supporting lifesaving cancer prevention research every step of the way. For details, email Lauren Douglas at [l.douglas@aicr.org](mailto:l.douglas@aicr.org).

# Complementary Therapies in Cancer Care

RESEARCH

## These evidence-based approaches can support treatment and improve well-being.

Complementary therapies are seen as valuable tools in cancer care when used alongside conventional treatments, such as surgery and chemotherapy. Evidence-based complementary approaches can help manage side effects and support well-being during and after cancer treatment.

Some complementary therapies have undergone careful evaluation and have been found to be safe and helpful. These include:

- Nutrition
- Physical activity
- Acupuncture
- Yoga and meditation

**You may hear the phrase “complementary and alternative therapies,” but these are different and it’s important to separate them.**

**Complementary therapies** are used *alongside* conventional cancer treatments, such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiation, to help manage side effects or improve treatment outcomes.

**Alternative therapies** are used *instead of* conventional care. They often lack scientific evidence, which means there is not enough information to recommend them. Delaying or refusing conventional treatment for unproven alternative therapies is risky and can be harmful.

## Complementary Therapies That May Help

Here are some complementary therapies that may help during and after cancer treatment.

**Nutrition:** For improved outcomes, nutrition should be considered alongside other cancer treatment from day one. Eating a balanced diet can help you:

- Heal and recover faster from treatments
- Reduce your risk of infection
- Support your immune system
- Build strength and energy

Work with an oncology dietitian to tailor a nutrition plan to address your personal needs.

You can use AICR’s New American Plate as a template to plan healthy meals (see page 4).

**Physical activity:** Aim for at least 150 minutes per week when you feel up to it. And it’s fine to start slowly. Any physical activity is better than none.

Physical activity can help:

- Elevate mood
- Improve sleep
- Reduce fatigue
- Support bone health
- Improve quality of life

Work with your oncologist or an exercise specialist to set up your personalized plan.

**Acupuncture:** Acupuncture is a practice that applies thin needles, heat or pressure on various places on the body. It may help relieve a range of cancer-related symptoms and treatment side effects, including:

- Nausea and vomiting
- Pain
- Cancer-related fatigue
- Sleep issues

Your cancer clinic can help you find a qualified acupuncture practitioner.

**Yoga and meditation:** Yoga aims to balance the mind and body through stretches, poses and controlled breathing. Meditation uses breathing or word repetition to quiet the mind and calm emotions. Both practices may help:

- Reduce stress
- Lessen anxiety
- Reduce fatigue

Choose a cancer-specific program that focuses on safe movement, breathing and relaxation rather than strenuous poses.



**AICR HAS PREPARED A SPECIAL PUBLICATION CALLED *COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES IN CANCER CARE: EVIDENCE-BASED OPTIONS TO SUPPORT TREATMENT*. YOU CAN RECEIVE A FREE COPY BY FOLLOWING THE INSTRUCTIONS ON PAGE 2.**



# AICR's Reaction to the New Dietary Guidelines for Americans

*Here's an overview of where the guidelines align and differ from AICR advice.*

The new Dietary Guidelines for Americans were released in January 2026. From AICR's perspective, the Guidelines contain both strong points with solid dietary advice as well as features that do not align with current evidence-based guidance on cancer prevention.

## What Aligns with AICR Advice?

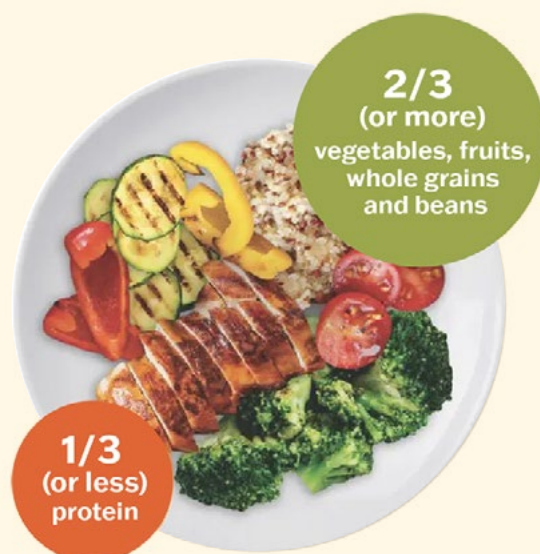
The strong emphasis on healthy dietary patterns, including increased consumption of fruits, vegetables and whole grains, aligns with AICR guidance in the New American Plate. The inclusion of plant-based proteins such as beans, lentils, nuts, seeds and soy is also positive.

AICR also agrees with the advice to limit highly processed foods and products high in added sugars. The Guidelines offer explicit recommendations to limit consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks. This aligns with AICR's evidence of sugar intake as a contributor to excess weight gain and poorer overall diet quality.

## What Differs from AICR Advice?

When it comes to cancer prevention, we have some concerns with the advice in the new Guidelines. The increased emphasis on animal proteins, particularly red meat, is at odds with the scientific evidence. Research links higher intakes of red and processed meat to increased cancer risk.

From a cancer prevention perspective, better advice would be to prioritize plant-based protein sources such as tofu, beans and lentils, as well as nuts, seeds, fish and poultry. Based on available evidence, we will continue to recommend limiting red meat to no more than 18 ounces (cooked weight) per week.



AICR's New American Plate

Similarly, the promotion of whole-fat dairy raises concerns, given the potential contribution to excess weight gain. Framing dairy as an optional food rather than a universal dietary staple is better advice.

The guidance to consume less alcohol is helpful, but AICR's stance is stricter. For cancer prevention, it is best not to drink alcohol at all. There is no safe level of alcohol consumption as it increases the risk for at least seven cancer types.

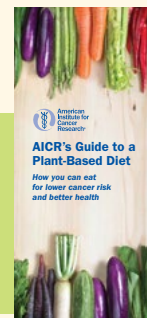
The Guidelines' discussion of "healthy fats" includes foods such as butter and beef tallow, while still recommending that saturated fat remains below 10 percent of total energy intake. It would be difficult to consume foods that are high in saturated fat, such as red meat, whole-fat dairy and butter, yet remain below 10 percent for saturated fat. Plus, high saturated fat intake is linked to increased heart disease risk.

## Some Important Gaps

The guidelines do not adequately address affordability and access to food. Without addressing this, they leave healthier dietary patterns out of reach for many low-income Americans. And importantly, it's not clear how environmental sustainability and planetary health will be incorporated.



**BROCHURE OFFER: AICR'S GUIDE TO A PLANT-BASED DIET. THIS BROCHURE EXPLORES THE DIETARY PATTERN THAT MAY HELP REDUCE CANCER RISK. SEE ORDER DETAILS ON PAGE 2.**



# Cancer Risk Awareness in the US: Key Findings from AICR's Latest Survey

AICR commissioned a survey to learn more about what Americans think may increase cancer risk. We asked about these established risk factors:

Risk Factor	May increase risk of these cancers
Obesity	Colorectal, Breast (post-menopausal), Ovarian, Esophageal, Endometrial, Kidney, Pancreatic, Gallbladder, Stomach, Liver, Mouth/pharynx/larynx, Advanced prostate
Not enough physical activity	Colorectal, Breast, Endometrial
Alcohol	Colorectal, Breast, Mouth/pharynx/larynx, Liver, Esophageal, Stomach
Low intake of vegetables and fruits	Colorectal, Mouth/pharynx/larynx
Low intake of fiber	Colorectal
High intake of red meat	Colorectal
High intake of processed meat	Colorectal, Stomach

## SURVEY RESULTS

Do Americans make the connection between cancer and these risk factors? Here is what we learned:

### Body weight

**62%** of Americans are aware of the link between obesity and cancer risk.

**Advice:** Keep your weight within the healthy range and avoid weight gain in adult life. Eat well using advice from AICR's New American Plate and exercise regularly.

### Physical Activity

**53%** of Americans are aware of the link between inactivity and cancer risk.

**Advice:** Be active for at least 150 minutes a week. Broken down, this is 30 minutes of exercise on five days of the week.

### Alcohol

**58%** of Americans are aware of the link between alcohol and cancer risk.

**Advice:** For cancer prevention, it is best not to drink alcohol at all. If you're going to drink despite this evidence, limit your intake to one drink a day for women or two drinks for men.

### Fruits and vegetables

**45%** of Americans are aware of the link between diets low in fruits and vegetables and cancer risk.

**Advice:** Follow the advice in AICR's New American Plate, which recommends filling 2/3 of your plate with fruits, vegetables, beans and whole grains at meals.

### Fiber

**38%** of Americans are aware of the link between diets low in fiber and cancer risk.

**Advice:** Aim for at least 30 grams of fiber per day from a variety of plant-based foods. Fiber is found in vegetables, fruits, beans, nuts, seeds and whole grains.

### Red and processed meat

**42%** of Americans are aware of the link between red meats and cancer risk.  
**50%** of Americans are aware of the link between processed meats and cancer risk.

**Advice:** If you eat red meat, limit the consumption to no more than 3 portions a week or about 12-18 ounces (cooked). Eat little, if any, processed meat.

**About the Survey:** A random sample of Americans ages 18 and older are contacted on behalf of AICR using the SSRS Opinion Panel Omnibus Survey (online or by phone). This survey included 1,034 interviews. Survey data was collected between December 16-18, 2024, with a margin of error of +/- 3.8%. Respondents were asked, "Which of the following do you believe has a significant effect on whether or not the average person develops cancer?" (options: "yes," "no," "don't know" or "refused").

## PROVIDE FOR YOUR FUTURE AND THAT OF THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE FOR CANCER RESEARCH

That's exactly what Wesley Hauck did by funding an American Institute for Cancer Research charitable gift annuity.

"I had some stocks that were paying very little in dividends, but the capital gains tax on selling them would have been tremendous. I realized that creating a charitable gift annuity with AICR would work to benefit both of us."

Advantages of an AICR Gift Annuity include lifetime payments at attractive rates, plus significant tax benefits for your charitable contribution.



Like Wesley Hauck, find out how AICR's Cancer Fighters Annuity Program can help you to make a truly satisfying gift to help fight cancer and provide you with fixed, lifetime payments with great tax benefits.

### SAMPLE RATES

(ONE BENEFICIARY)

Age 65	5.7%
Age 75	7.0%
Age 85	9.1%
Age 90+	10.1%



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Arlington, VA 22209

### ASK THE FINANCIAL EXPERT...

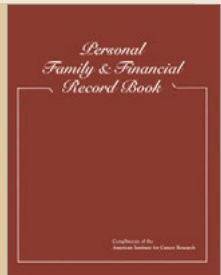
**Q:** I have a \$100,000 paid-up life insurance policy that was to provide support for my father in the event he outlived me. He died earlier this year of colon cancer. Is there some way I can use this policy to support AICR's colon cancer research efforts?

**A:** Our condolences on the loss of your father. There are several ways life insurance can be used to further colon cancer research. You can make AICR the death beneficiary of the policy simply by asking the insurance company for a change of beneficiary form. Another option is to make AICR the owner of the policy. You would be entitled to an income tax charitable deduction for the value of your gift. If there is a cash surrender, we could cash in the policy and use the funds for immediate colon cancer research.

**Questions?** Please contact AICR at 1-800-843-8114.



**BROCHURE: PERSONAL FAMILY & FINANCIAL RECORD BOOK. THIS BOOK CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU RECORD FINANCIAL DETAILS SO LOVED ONES CAN SORT OUT YOUR ESTATE AND CARRY OUT YOUR WISHES. SEE ORDER DETAILS ON PAGE 2.**



# Are Seed Oils Actually Bad for You?

*Learn why the online fears about seed oils don't match the science.*

Seed oils have become one of the most controversial topics in nutrition, with many social media influencers warning they cause inflammation and chronic disease. But these claims oversimplify the science and overlook decades of research on dietary fats.

Let's take a closer look at what seed oils are, where the concerns come from and what the evidence shows about their effects on health.

## What Are Seed Oils?

"Seed oils" are vegetable oils produced from seeds. Some common seed oils are:

- Canola oil
- Corn oil
- Cottonseed oil
- Grapeseed oil
- Rice bran oil
- Safflower oil
- Soybean oil
- Sunflower seed oil

Not all vegetable oils come from seeds. For example, olive, avocado, and coconut oil come from the flesh of fruits, while almond and walnut oil come from nuts.

## What Is the Concern about Seed Oils?

Some online influencers warn against eight specific seed oils (listed above), calling them the "hateful eight." This negative view is based more on opinion than fact, but the two big concerns are:

- Seed oils contain omega-6 fats, which are claimed to be "unstable" and cause inflammation.
- Seed oils are chemically processed and claimed to have toxic residue from hexane.

## Seed Oils and Inflammation

Inflammation plays a dual role in health. It can help



fight infection and repair tissue. But when inflammation is chronic, it can contribute to conditions such as cancer and heart disease.

Claims that seed oils promote inflammation stem from early lab studies showing that linoleic acid, an omega-6 fat common in seed oils, can form pro-inflammatory compounds. Importantly, newer research shows the body converts only a small amount of omega-6 into these compounds. Plus, the body also makes anti-inflammatory compounds.

The takeaway? Diets higher in omega-6 fats are not linked to higher inflammation. They may help reduce inflammation when consumed in proper amounts.

## Seed Oils and Chemical Processing

Hexane is a solvent used to pull oil from crushed seeds. While the FDA does not monitor hexane content in seed oil, the industry standard is to remove the solvent, leaving behind only trace amounts.

**Inhaling hexane may harm the nervous system. Little evidence relates to risk from consuming hexane. The average person's intake of traces of hexane from seed oils is dwarfed by exposures from other sources, such as gasoline fumes. The takeaway? For trace quantities, studies show hexane does not appear to cause DNA damage that could lead to cancer.**

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AICR maintains its own mailing list. Occasionally we rent this list or exchange lists with other organizations in order to maintain an active donor file to support AICR's services. If you do not wish to participate in this program, please let us know.

For article sources, call or write AICR headquarters.

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# Can GLP-1 Medications Help Lower Cancer Risk?

*New fellowship research will examine early immune, hormone and metabolic pathways linked to obesity-related cancers and whether adding strength training boosts benefits.*

Kristin Altwegg, PhD

Every breakthrough starts with a question and with people who believe the answer is worth pursuing.

Because of AICR donors, the AICR/WCRF Marilyn Gentry Fellowship does more than fund a project. It invests in a person: a rising scientist with the time and resources to chase bold ideas that can move cancer prevention forward.

This year, we're proud to introduce Dr. Kristin Altwegg, PhD, the newest recipient of the University of North Carolina-Marilyn Gentry Fellowship.

## What Will Dr. Altwegg Study?

In her fellowship research, Dr. Altwegg will explore whether GLP-1 weight-management medications, such as semaglutide and tirzepatide, may influence early cancer-related pathways in obesity-related cancers, including breast, endometrial and colorectal.

Her work is designed to help answer a timely question: Could these medications help lower cancer risk, or even interrupt cancer's earliest steps for individuals with obesity? Her research will examine two promising directions:

- Immune defense: whether GLP-1 medications may strengthen certain immune responses that help the body recognize and eliminate abnormal cells early.
- Hormone and metabolic signals: whether shifts in key signals associated with excess body fat may reduce conditions that can contribute to cancer development.

In a second, interconnected project, Dr. Altwegg will study whether pairing tirzepatide with strength

training may provide added benefits for metabolic health and other factors tied to breast cancer risk and compare it to medication alone or exercise alone.

## From Early Sparks to Lifelong Purpose

Dr. Altwegg's passion started with a high school biology teacher who challenged her to move beyond memorization and truly apply what she learned. Later, a university professor sparked her interest in research. Her story is also rooted in the land as a fifth-generation farmer and rancher from Kansas. Her upbringing shaped her curiosity about what influences health over a lifetime.

Now, she joins the lab of Dr. Stephen Hursting at UNC, positioning her at the heart of one of the most respected programs studying cancer prevention.

## Your Support Makes This Possible

Early career researchers often have the most urgent questions, but the fewest opportunities to pursue them. The AICR/WCRF Marilyn Gentry Fellowship changes that by providing up to three years of support in a mentored environment at UNC at Chapel Hill, with access to world-class expertise and research infrastructure at the Gillings School of Global Public Health.

Your generosity helps ensure that early-career scientists like Dr. Altwegg have the support to ask hard questions, run careful studies and follow the evidence wherever it leads. And that's how the future of cancer prevention is built: one researcher, one discovery, one life-changing insight at a time.

On behalf of AICR and Dr. Altwegg, thank you for making this fellowship possible.