

# Alternatives to surgery

**SPECIAL TO THE SUN** SEPTEMBER 29, 2010

Friends, family and the Internet are all sources of information, for someone dealing with cancer. Research conducted in Vancouver and published in 2003 showed 39 per cent of recently diagnosed prostate cancer patients used some sort of complementary medicine based on such advice. Here's a reality check on some of the suggestions.

- Diet -In general, eating lots of fruits and vegetables while reducing intake of red meat, high-fat and processed foods is recommended by most health promoters. Prostate cancer rates are much lower in Japan where diets are higher in soy, fish and vegetables and lower in meat and fat.
- Green tea -A concentrated extract of green tea reduced prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels and other markers of prostate cancer in men scheduled for surgery, according to a 2009 U.S. study. The men took capsules containing the antioxidant polyphenon E, equivalent to about 12 cups of tea daily.
- Lycopene -The antioxidant was the subject of a study conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health published in 2002. It concluded that eating tomato sauce and tomato paste -which have higher levels of lycopene than raw tomatoes -reduced the risk of prostate cancer.
- Reishi mushroom -The edible mushroom *Ganoderma lucidum* is also known as ling zhi in traditional Chinese medicine, where it has been used to promote health for thousands of years. Contemporary scientific research shows extracts from the mushroom reduce cancer cell growth in laboratory settings. The potency and quality of commercial supplements varies so much that it's impossible to reach a conclusion about their usefulness.
- Pectin -A 2007 study concluded that commercially available pectin powder destroyed human prostate cancer cells at a rate 40-times higher than non-treated cells. Pectin is in all fruits and vegetables.
- Pomegranate juice -Research from the University of California at Los Angeles published in 2006 found that a daily glass of pomegranate juice significantly reduced the doubling times of PSA in men who had surgery or radiation for prostate cancer.
- Saw palmetto -It's now known saw palmetto improves symptoms associated with an enlarged prostate such as frequent nighttime urination or low urinary flow, but has no effect on prostate cancer.
- Selenium and vitamin E -A three year study by the U.S. National Cancer Institute found that selenium and vitamin E, alone or together -did not prevent prostate cancer.

The BC Cancer Agency's website

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[www.bccancer.bc.ca](http://www.bccancer.bc.ca)-- offers a wealth of information about the evidence to support or debunk commonly used supplements and herbs.

