Sugar and Cancer: Is there a connection?

Researchers are continuing to investigate the connection between sugar and cancer. The facts about sugar and cancer are often presented in the media and on the internet in a way that is misleading and anxiety-producing for people with cancer.

- The undeniable fact is that glucose (the form of sugar used most in the body) feeds every cell of the body and is important for brain function. Even if you cut out every bit of sugar in your diet, your body will make sugar from other sources, such as protein and fat.

- The thought that sugar directly feeds the growth of cancer cells can lead some people to avoid all carbohydrate containing foods. This is counter-productive for those struggling to maintain weight while dealing with cancer related treatment side effects. Trying to avoid all sugar may lead to increased anxiety. The resulting stress increases the production of hormones that can raise blood sugar levels and suppress immune function. Thus, any possible benefits of eliminating sugar are reduced by stress hormones.

- Research suggests the relationship of sugar to higher insulin levels along with related growth factors may influence cancer cell growth and other chronic diseases. So, sugar does not exactly “feed” cancer cells, but a lot of sugar can lead to production of too much insulin, which is not good for health.

**General recommendations**

- Focus on whole, healthy, unprocessed foods including vegetables, fresh fruit, whole grains, legumes (beans, lentils, and peas), nuts, and seeds.

- Avoid concentrated sources of sugar such as all sugary drinks limiting fruit juice to 4 oz. daily.