



Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center
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CRANBERRY WALNUT TABBOULEH RECIPE

We know you're probably tired of cooking and just want to go out to eat! Hopefully, this recipe gives you inspiration for one more meal to include in your rotation at home. This version takes liberties with the classic Mediterranean salad, replacing tomatoes and cucumber with cranberries and walnuts. It's fast and easy to prepare, features whole grain, includes ingredients found year-round, and makes a great lunch on its own or as a side dish with lean protein and sauteed vegetables for dinner.

Yield: 6 servings (serving size 2/3 cup)

Ingredients:

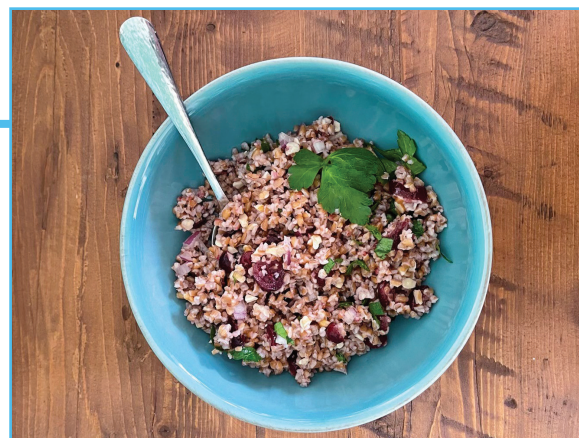
- 1 cup bulgur wheat (*usually located near rice, oats, or grains in the grocery store*)
- ½ cup dried cranberries (*low sugar if available*)
- 1 cup boiling water
- ½ cup chopped fresh parsley
- ¼ cup minced red onion
- ¼ cup fresh lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped walnuts
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh mint (*optional*)
- 1 ½ tablespoons olive or walnut oil
- ¾ teaspoon salt, optional
- ¼ teaspoon pepper

Directions:

Combine bulgur and cranberries in a medium bowl. Add 1 cup of boiling water and let stand for 30 minutes or until all the water has been absorbed. Fluff the bulgur with a fork. Stir in the chopped parsley and the remaining ingredients and toss gently to combine.

Quinoa, brown rice, farro, or chopped cauliflower are great, healthy substitutes for bulgur wheat if you cannot find it at your local grocery store.

Be sure to check out Fred Hutch's website "Cook for Your Life" (<https://www.cookforyourlife.org/>) for lots of other healthy recipes and how-to videos.



CORE news

Colorectal Research in Epidemiology
Colon Cancer Family Registry Cohort

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We are pleased to share another edition of CORE News! First, we want to acknowledge how challenging and unique these times have been over the last year. We all have been impacted by COVID-19 and we send our sincere condolences to anyone who has lost loved ones this past year. Like many others, our CORE staff have adjusted to working remotely or working in shifts to maintain safety, and I am so proud to say that these changes have not impacted our productivity. We continue to complete follow-up interviews with participants and engage in new collaborations with researchers around the world. To keep some normalcy during these times, and connect with our valued research participants, the entire CORE staff thought it was especially important to write another informative edition of CORE News.

In this newsletter, we focus on COVID-19 and its impact on cancer. We want to acknowledge that being a cancer patient, caregiver, or survivor is a challenging experience on its own, and living through an unprecedented pandemic on top of that is a double burden. For that reason, the first article provides a list of tips for managing your mental health and wellbeing during the pandemic. The next article will discuss how COVID-19 has impacted cancer screenings, the importance of continuing cancer screenings, and how to do so safely during this time. The last article will provide some common questions and answers about the COVID-19 vaccines developed so far and provide resources on where to find up-to-date information, since this can change so rapidly. We conclude with another healthy and delicious recipe to hopefully provide fresh inspiration for all those meals we eat at home now!

We are extremely proud to be part of an organization that has helped lead the way in the response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Fred Hutch leveraged their expertise in cancer and infectious disease to track the spread of the COVID-19 virus and to establish the COVID-19 Prevention Network, which helps manage several COVID-19 vaccine clinical trials. They've partnered with the CDC and the Washington State Department of Health to help educate the public with the latest information and research, all while continuing to work incredibly hard to find cures for cancer.

The CORE Studies team has been fortunate to continue our impactful work on colorectal cancer prevention during these challenging times. We continue to be grateful for our participants who have stayed in contact with us for their 5th interviews and look forward to continue hearing from you over the next few years. As always, your dedication to this study and colorectal cancer research is inspirational, and without your help we could not continue working on advances that benefit both current and future cancer patients, and families. Thank you for your continued participation in the CORE Studies!

Best regards,

Polly A. Newcomb, PhD, MPH
Principal Investigator



Photo Credit:
Robert Hood/Fred Hutch News Service

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MANAGING MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING DURING THE PANDEMIC

With social activities still disrupted, the news providing a constant stream of alarming updates, and stores running out of stock for essential items, you may be feeling increasingly isolated, depressed, anxious, and uncertain about the future. Add to this the fact that older adults, those with weakened immune systems, and other health conditions (like cancer) are particularly vulnerable to complications from COVID-19, and you may be feeling even more stress. Thankfully, it is still possible to improve your overall mental wellbeing.

We are here to remind you that this storm will pass and that you are not alone. In support of this we wanted to provide you with some helpful tips to manage the stress and anxiety during these unprecedented times! These tips help for any stressful situation. We've compiled these tips from cancer survivorship experts, mental health professionals, organizations like the CDC and AARP, and research studies.

1. **Routine is your friend:** Schedule time to work, exercise, eat, and sleep and, stick to this schedule as best you can. This helps create structure and stability at home and diverts your attention from anxious thoughts. Also schedule *pleasurable activities* and time for creative expression like watching a movie or your favorite hobby. Make a to-do list! Actively making a list and crossing off tasks, including ones that make you feel accomplished such as laundry, or paying a bill, can help manage anxiety and remind you that you have achieved specific goals during your day.

2. **Take care of your body:** Be intentional about how you move and what nutrients you use to fuel your body. Try to incorporate at least 5-9 servings of vegetables and fruits, and in particular, crucifers like broccoli (and resist the urge to eat comfort junk food). Avoid excessive alcohol, tobacco, and substance use and if you drink, try to limit alcohol to 1 serving per day. Exercise can help lower your stress, reduce anxiety and depression, regulate your emotions, and support better sleep. There are now many virtual exercise options available to help you tailor workouts to your needs. Aim for 20 minutes a day of moderate to vigorous exercise, although even less strenuous yoga or walking can be very beneficial, especially if you can get outside. There are extensive studies showing the medical and mental benefits of being outside. If mobility is an issue, even being near a window has been shown to boost wellbeing.

3. **Rest and unplug:** Regular sleep is crucial during these times. Try taking a warm bath or shower to relax your muscles or meditate before bedtime. It's good to stay informed but hearing about the pandemic constantly can be unsettling. Consider limiting news and social media via computer/ phone/tv, especially before bed. You can also set timers to limit how long you engage on these platforms. If you want background noise, opt for music or audiobooks instead.
4. **Engage in mind-body practices:** You can engage in structured mindfulness exercises by setting aside some time for meditation, prayer, guided imagery, deep breathing, or a quiet activity. These help relax the body and mind to combat distractions of worry and anxiety and help you regain control. You may experience times when you still feel overwhelmed and stressed. That's okay! We've all experienced losses during the months of this ongoing pandemic, and it may be useful to acknowledge and tap into these feelings. Make room for those emotions by journaling or being present—you may be surprised how much freedom you feel when you stop trying to be okay all the time.

5. **Stay connected:** Social distancing does not mean total isolation. Studies have shown the importance of social connection and its strong association with overall happiness. Find ways to connect with others and make this a priority to help boost your mental health. Continue to have meaningful and intellectually stimulating conversations! You can use phone calls, video chats, or photo sharing platforms. Schedule activities with friends and family like cooking together virtually, playing virtual games like trivia or scrabble, or walking in the park. Finally, online psychotherapy has also become very affordable, secure, easily accessible, and increasingly available during the pandemic. So many people are tapping into this very useful resource.
- These are just a few ideas to help you improve your mental health and to stay engaged and stimulated. We encourage you to stay resilient, find ways to laugh, and be compassionate to yourself and others. Everyone is having trouble adjusting to daily life changes, so most importantly of all, remember you are not alone and it's okay to reach out and ask for help!

If you're starting to have thoughts about self-harm, get help immediately and we suggest calling the 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, at 800-273-8255.

COVID-19 AND CANCER SCREENING

Since the beginning of the pandemic, research has shown that new cancer diagnoses have declined. This sounds like good news but is most likely from people having to delay their cancer screenings and other routine health appointments and not actually due to fewer people having cancer. When screenings are delayed, cancer has more time to grow and spread before detection. This can lead to worse health outcomes and more difficult treatment regimens. Researchers have started to quantify cancer screening delays from the early pandemic months. An analysis of 20 different health care institutions showed that colorectal cancer screening dropped by 84.5% through May 2020. The National Cancer Institute created a model that estimates the COVID-19 pandemic could result in 10,000 additional colorectal and

breast cancer deaths within the next 10 years from a delay in cancer diagnoses. As this model demonstrates, routine cancer screening is so important.

You may be thinking “What about my risk of getting COVID-19 during my cancer screening?” Now that we know so much more about the COVID-19 virus, colonoscopies and endoscopies are safe procedures since health care facilities now offer multiple forms of protection to lower your risk of contracting COVID-19. Protection may include screening for symptoms before entering the health care facility, requiring proof of negative COVID-19 test before the procedure, and clinicians who are outfitted with personal protective equipment. If you are still nervous, there may be other options. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force has found other cancer screening tests effective, such as an annual Fecal Immunochemical Test (FIT) test for most people of average risk. A FIT test is an at-home stool sample test that only requires one stool sample. A negative FIT test will result in no further screenings for another year, but a positive test will need to be followed by a colonoscopy (however most patients avoid this outcome). Colonoscopies still offer some advantages over at-home screening tests: 1) a negative colonoscopy test means another test is not needed for a longer period of time and 2) polyps or growths that could become cancerous could be removed during a colonoscopy.

Please do not delay your routine cancer screening(s). Contact your health care provider if you would like more detailed information on safe cancer screening options during the pandemic. Policies for cancer screenings may differ based on your health care facility and COVID-19 severity in your area.

COVID-19 VACCINE Q&A

Fred Hutch, the COVID-19 Prevention Network, and the Washington State Department of Health have created the website (<https://www.PreventCovidWA.org>) to help everyone understand the COVID-19 vaccines, and how they can help get people back to work and school as soon - and as safely - as possible. This website has videos and other content to help people find answers to their questions so they can make an informed decision about getting vaccinated. This is a great resource for the most up-to-date information. We offer some common questions and answers below, but we encourage you to check the website since we know the knowledge about COVID-19 and the available vaccines are changing so rapidly.

Is a vaccine necessary?

The recent roll-out of vaccines has given us hope that life will soon return to “normal.” The fastest way to get back to normal is to do all we can to prevent the spread of COVID-19 by practicing safety measures. Another proactive thing we can do is get vaccinated as soon as we are eligible.

Do I still need to use safety precautions after I've been vaccinated?

Yes, even if you get vaccinated, it is highly recommended you continue to wear a mask, wash your hands often, stay six feet apart, and limit gatherings. Many people will need to wait months to get the vaccine, and these prevention measures are recommended to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 to people who are not yet vaccinated.

The COVID-19 vaccines work well, but they are not 100% effective. Some people may get COVID-19 even if they have been vaccinated, and even if it is just asymptomatic or mild illness, you could still be contagious.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Researchers collected safety and efficacy data as part of the Phase III clinical trials in the U.S. and other countries. A combined total of over 100,000 volunteers participated in the clinical trials for the Pfizer, Johnson and Johnson, and Moderna vaccines. Before the vaccines became available the federal Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices conducted a review to ensure they could safely recommend the vaccines and for which populations.

It is important to note that you cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccines created by the pharmaceutical companies Pfizer and Moderna do not have any virus or other infectious material in them. The Johnson and Johnson vaccine uses a different virus (like one for the common cold) that has been modified so it cannot give you a cold. All vaccines are designed to cause your body to make copies of a harmless piece of the coronavirus, so you create an immune response to this piece without having to be exposed to the actual virus.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for cancer patients and cancer survivors?

The current medical recommendation is that most cancer patients and survivors should get the vaccine as soon as they are eligible. Patients in treatment should work with their oncologists to time the two-shot vaccine and discuss their eligibility. The consensus is that cancer patients are not expected to be at greater risk for complications from the vaccine(s), but they are at higher risk for acquiring COVID-19 and experiencing complications of the virus.

