Gina: You're listening to The Healthy In Real Life Podcast episode number 46.

Speaker 2: Welcome to The Healthy In Real Life Podcast, bite-sized tips for healthy living that you can implement right now. Join us weekly for interview and real life advice for creating the happiest and healthiest version of yourself. Here's your host, fitness expert, author, and mom of two, Gina Harney.

Gina: Hey, everyone. This is Gina, creator of the Fitnessista blog and brand. I am so excited that you're here, and I wanted to apologize for going dark and disappearing for a while. It feels really good to be back. We had a death in the family, my grandfather passed away, and it has been a lot harder than I expected. I just haven't wanted to do as many things as I did before. But I realized that it's important for me to just slowly make my way back into a routine, back into the things that I enjoy. We obviously miss him a lot, and I still can't believe he's gone, and I'm literally about to cry right now. But since it's the holidays, I think we all just feel it a little bit more.

Gina: So, it's going to be a little weird this time of year, but I wanted to come back because I missed connecting with you guys, and even while we were in the thick of grieving and everything else going on, I would still check the podcast app and see your five-star reviews in there, and they just really brought a smile to my face. So, thank you to those of you who took the time to do that, even though I wasn't creating new content at the time; it means so much to me, so I would just check it and see a new five-star review pop up, and it was like, "Oh." That was a nice little high-five, because it's kind of a rough time right now.

Gina: So, doing much better, I am excited to be back. This podcast episode topic is pretty near and dear to my heart because today, we are talking about tips for cancer prevention. My grandfather did have cancer. It was not the reason why he passed, but I feel like so many of us have been touched by this, and I almost feel like cancer is a bad word. And you might even be able to tell from this interview that while we're talking about it, it was kind of making me angry. I am a pretty laid-back person, but cancer is something that makes me very upset, and it just is heartbreaking to hear about how many people are impacted by this, and the fact that there are things that you can do to possibly prevent different types of cancer, but in a lot of ways, you can't.

Gina: And I've heard about and I've known so many people that are extremely healthy and have still, unfortunately, had to experience this. And I just want to put it out there that if you have had a diagnosis, or someone in your family has had a diagnosis, I am sending you all of my love, I am so sorry, I am rooting for you, I know that you can beat it, and I hope that hopefully, these strategies will empower you and not make you feel badly. I don't want you to hear her tips and be like, "Oh, well, if I would have done that, this wouldn't have happened." That is not the case at all. Sometimes life sucks, and you get dealt a hand that is so unfair and horrible, but I am hoping that her tips can just help empower all of us to make healthier choices. So, even if you are going through treatment, maybe it'll help your treatment be more successful, maybe it'll help you feel better, maybe it'll help all of us feel better.

Gina: She has so many amazing tips in this episode, I really hope you enjoy it, but before we hop in, I am going to go ahead and read this week's five-star review. And like I said, thank you, guys, to those of you who have been leaving these even though I went dark for a little while here unexpectedly.

Gina: This one says, "As a longtime reader of Gina's blog, I enthusiastically tuned into her podcast when it first launched. Not surprisingly, it quickly rose to the top of my playlist. I look forward to new episodes as she continues to weave function, facts, and lighthearted conversations together for content that is relatable and easy to follow. Just when I thought I couldn't love her more, she came streaming through my speakers. For that, I am grateful, and the more knowledgeable about how I am able to apply health and wellness to my daily life. Thank you, Gina."

Gina: Thank you so much, and that is exactly the goal, exactly what I want to do here, just share information that we can all use to be healthier and happier. So, just hearing that you enjoy it and you find it valuable means the world to me! And if you guys wouldn't mind just taking a minute to leave that five-star review, it's just going to help continue to grow the show; it's grown a bit over the past year, which is really exciting, and I would just love to be able to feature more awesome guests. So, thank you for that.

Gina: Before we go ahead and roll into this episode, I wanted to tell you guys about Les Mills On Demand. As you know, I love Les Mills, I love their on-demand platform, there are over 800 workouts right now. Their instructors are the best of the best. There is nothing worse than being at home or traveling and feeling excited to do a workout, and then pressing Play and the workout is a giant bummer. And the instructor isn't good, or the music isn't good, and it's just not what you're into.

Gina: That has never happened to me with a Les Mills workout. I press Play and I am pumped to crush it, because their music is so motivating, the instructors are inspiring, they're knowledgeable, they coach extremely well on safe form. All of the workouts are scientifically designed, so they know that you should be doing 35 of these tiny squats, and not 38, for whatever reason. They are very specific about the rep counts and how many full-range you do, how many pulses you do. It's very interesting.

Gina: So, they know their stuff. If you haven't tried Les Mills On Demand, I made a Bitly. It's bit.ly/yaylesmills, and you will get 21 days of their workouts for free. I'll include this link in the show notes for you guys. It's perfect during the holidays, especially if you're traveling. So, just go to bit.ly/yaylesmills.

Gina: Let's go ahead and get started on today's episode! I am chatting with my friend Lauren Larson about cancer prevention strategies through nutrition specifically. So, we talk about, what is the best way to eat? What are recommendations that aren't on this list of the 10 Top Cancer Prevention Recommendations? We talk a little bit about CBD, animal protein; she is a wealth of knowledge, and I hope you even just take this information and just use it to make small changes that help you feel good and help you feel healthier.

Gina: So, welcome to the show, Lauren.

Gina: Hey, Lauren! Thank you so much for being on the show today.

Lauren Larson: Thanks for having me, Gina. I'm so excited to be here.

Gina: Yes! I'm so excited you're here, and to chat with you. Before we kind of dive into the questions, would you mind just talking a little bit about your background, and how you became a registered dietician, and what made you so passionate about oncology?

Lauren Larson: Sure, yeah. My path to becoming a registered dietician really began almost as early as I can remember. I was very active throughout my childhood and into high school with gymnastics and softball and track and field, and then in college, I started running just for fun and to help minimize the college weight gain. And I also struggled a little bit with hypoglycemia, which is low blood sugar, and some IBS-like symptoms, and I remember, at a young age, I met with a dietician and he drew this little blood sugar graph for me, and I just kind of always remember that moment.

Lauren Larson: In college, I did a lot of my own research on nutrition, and kind of that passion really started to grow. At the time, it was about 10 years ago, so it when food blogs really started going up on the rise. I was doing a lot of food blog-reading, and making recipes from blogs, and just kind of kept promoting that passion. My now-husband and I also became endurance athletes, doing long-distance running and cycling and triathlon events, and in order to support those events, I also did a lot of research on diet and activity, and that really helped improve our performance.

Lauren Larson: So, in college, I studied to be an engineer, and was not in nutrition; I didn't even know it was an option at that point. And I worked through that degree, and I worked as a software engineer for about five years, and I just really wasn't happy sitting behind a computer and not really connecting with my co-workers, and I found a volunteer opportunity to help teach nutrition classes to elementary school kids alongside a registered dietician.

Lauren Larson: So, I did that for about two years, and it was just really rewarding, and it really prompted me to decide to go back to school and study nutrition. And the dietician I worked with really encouraged me to go along the path of becoming a dietician versus a holistic nutritionist, just so it opened a little bit more doors for me, and I really appreciated that advice and have really enjoyed my education and my career thus far.

Lauren Larson: Since graduating about five years ago from my master's in nutrition, and passing the RD exam and my internship before that, I had been working both in kind of an in-patient clinical setting as well as various outpatient community activities, such as cooking classes and teaching lesson plans with the kids. And within the last... a little over a year ago, I kind of fell into an oncology position just because it was closer to home, and now, I love my job so much. I love the people I work with. I feel so fortunate to be working in oncology. I really want to continue working in oncology for the foreseeable future.

Gina: That's incredible.

Lauren Larson: So, I work at this small cancer center in the mountains of Colorado, and we have an amazing survivorship program that I'm really lucky to be a part of, and I get to help patients manage their nutrition-related side effects during their treatment as well as help them work on weight management. But outside of that, I get to do fun activities with them such as skiing, bowling, hiking, biking, painting, line dancing, all these great activities that really help bring the patients together outside of their treatment, and it really just helps give them support during a really tough time as well as kind of promoting that survivorship, and health and wellness.

Gina: That is so incredible, and you're making such a huge, positive impact for them, too, and giving them these tools that they can use from then on.

Gina: I'm really excited to talk to you about nutrition for cancer prevention today, but I wanted to start off this conversation just by saying that I don't want anyone who listens to this podcast who has been diagnosed with cancer to feel badly about themselves. There are so many things that are beyond our control, and I just want everyone who listens to this to feel empowered with all the information that you share, but definitely not to feel badly about themselves. And yeah, just to keep that in mind.

Lauren Larson: Right. You're so right, and so many of the things that we can do for cancer prevention are going to benefit our health in so many other ways...

Gina: Yes.

Lauren Larson: That, and there's only so much we can control.

Gina: Yeah, exactly. And I feel like the nutrition advice that you're sharing can help people no matter what, if they just want to be healthier in general, and then hopefully, people who are going through treatment or experiencing that right now could use those strategies, too. Because I would imagine that it would make the treatment better, more successful; is that true?

Lauren Larson: Yes, absolutely, and it also helps improve survivorship.

Gina: Amazing. So, how many people are diagnosed with cancer each year, and what are some of the most common types, and what would you consider to be preventable?

Lauren Larson: Yeah. Really, we are all at risk for cancer, sort of regardless of our lifestyle. But the chances that we either have been effected by cancer directly or know someone who has been effected by cancer is pretty high. So, that probably includes all of us. In the United States, one in four people will develop cancer in their lifetime, and those rates are just continuing to increase. And some of the most common types of cancers include cancers of the GI tract, so, of the mouth or of the esophagus, the colon and the rectum; also, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and lung cancer.

Lauren Larson: Around 40% of the cancers that are diagnosed are considered preventable by risk factors that we can control, such as diet, weight, and physical activity. In the United States, that's about almost 700,000 cases a year, which is pretty significant.

Gina: Wow! Just hearing those stats, it makes me feel sick to my stomach. It's just like, it blows my mind... My mom and I were talking about it, and back in the day, it would be so rare if you heard about someone who had cancer. Like, "Oh, my gosh. I can't believe that's happening," and now, it's rare to find someone whose family hasn't been impacted by cancer in some way.

Lauren Larson: Right. And it's very possible that the number one killer of Americans is going to be cancer, not heart disease, which is what it is now.

Gina: That is horrifying. Would you mind talking a little bit about the American Institute for Cancer Research and the World Cancer Research Fund?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, sure. So, the American Institute of Cancer Research is a group that supports the cutting-edge research in the area of nutrition, physical activity, cancer prevention, treatment, and survival. They take this research and they combined it with findings from just the global scientific community, and they interpret all that research, and put it together in an evidence-based way that they use to then educate the public. And the World Cancer Research Fund, they're more... basically very similar, but more of an international leader on the links between diet, nutrition, physical activity, and cancer.

Lauren Larson: So, the World Cancer Research Fund, they hope to increase the awareness of the link between diet and cancer, and with the ultimate goal of us all living in a world where no one develops a preventable cancer. Which would be really nice!

Gina: Yes, that would be amazing! And it's just so interesting, too, like in school, they teach us all these skills that we don't really use later on in our life, and they don't teach us the basics of nutrition, or how to take care of ourselves.

Lauren Larson: Right. So true.

Gina: I know, it's really interesting. They create a landmark report, is that correct? That they...

Lauren Larson: Yeah. Right. They put together this big report, and they're on their third report now, and they basically take all of the research over the last 10 years and really analyze it. They have a independent panel of researchers that evaluate it, and then they also grade the evidence based on its strength, and they look at each different cancer type. So, it's a very comprehensive report that summarizes kind of the link and the impact of diet and nutrition and physical activity on cancer risk.

Lauren Larson: And I think this is particularly important right now because there is so much conflicting information out there, that you can essentially go on the internet and pick and choose things that reinforces what you already believe. Or someone else can pick and choose information that enforces what they want you to believe, and so, it's just really hard right now in our Information Age to know what has the most evidence behind it. What's correct? What's a hoax? It's just really hard, and this report makes it, I think, a lot more clear.

Gina: It's like you said, you can find some things to kind of fit any recommendation online. It's very confusing, there's a lot of information out there, and is this information... it's not biased in any way, is that correct?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, that is the goal. The goal is to kind of pool this all together and have independent researchers analyze it so that it is not biased.

Gina: Okay, that's good to know, because you'll find a study online and it'll say, "Read meat increases longevity by 50 years." And then you scroll to the bottom, and it's like, "Paid for by The National Beef Association."

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: And you're like, "Oh, okay, thanks. Thanks for that." So, would you mind sharing the top 10 cancer prevention recommendations?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, sure. Like you said, there's 10 recommendations, which I think is such a smart way for them to put it together because it makes it doable for people, and achievable, and it really touches on so many different parts of diet and lifestyle. And a lot of these things are going to sound familiar, because they are recommendations that come from different organizations, as well, who have also looked at the research kind of specifically within their realm, but this is pulling it all together, and it's tying it to cancer prevention.

Lauren Larson: So, we know that... number one is to be at a healthy weight. The goal is to keep your weight within a healthy range, and avoid weight gain in adult life. That may be in college, or after stopping some sport activities, maybe as you get older or an injury, and then gaining a big chunk of weight, and then successfully losing it... While that's good to lose that weight and not keep it on, that weight gain that you had in that period of time can increase risk. So, keeping your BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 is the goal, and that if you are unsure what your BMI is, it's a ratio of height, weight, and there's a ton of calculators online that you can use to calculate it.

Lauren Larson: But if you are currently overweight or obese, even a modest amount of weight loss, even five to seven percent, can potentially reduce cancer risk. So, it doesn't have to be getting you within the healthy BMI range. Even just this modest amount can be beneficial.

Lauren Larson: Number two is to be physically active. As part of every day of life, and just overall making it the goal of walking more and sitting less. This includes, you know, a lot of us have desk jobs these days; this includes movement throughout the day. So, if you a lifestyle where you go do some crazy Orange Theory class in the morning, and then you go sit behind your desk for nine hours, that's not really going to be considered physically active as part of your whole day. Instead, finding ways to get up to walk during breaks, or at lunch, or walking to the bathroom down the hall instead of the one right next to your office, or to the water cooler in the other building, and things like that.

Lauren Larson: So, the goal is to aim for 150 minutes of moderate activity a week, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity per week, and that can be broken down into 10-minute increments. And the goal would be to get to a point where you're a little bit out of breath, can't quite sing a song, but can still talk. That's how you can gauge whether or not it's considered moderate.

Lauren Larson: Number three is to eat a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruit, and beans. This should really be a major part of your typical daily diet. Aiming for more than five servings of non-starchy vegetables or fruits each day is a good goal for people, and non-starchy vegetables basically are anything other than potatoes, peas, and corn. Some sweet potatoes can be, or winter squash can be on the starchy side, but to make it easy, consider all non-starchy vegetables anything other than potatoes, peas, and corn. So, leafy greens, red bell peppers, onions, mushrooms, cauliflower, broccoli, eggplant; those are all good examples of those non-starchy vegetables.

Gina: Good to know, because you hear a lot of mixed information on whole grains and legumes, saying that they're inflammatory.

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: So, you would disagree with that? You say go for it.

Lauren Larson: I would.

Gina: Okay.

Lauren Larson: Yeah, there is some research that supports consumption of whole grains and increase lifespan.

Gina: Interesting.

Lauren Larson: And this really goes back to how you can pick and choose research out there to support what it is you believe, or what you want someone else to believe. But the body of research says whole grains are part of a healthful diet.

Gina: Interesting, that's good to know, and if you look at the blue zones, too, where the have the highest concentration of people who live to be over 100, beans and rice are a huge part of their diets.

Lauren Larson: Right. Number four is to limit the consumption of fast food. This would be processed foods that are high in fat, starches, or added sugars, and really, the goal of this one is to help control calorie intake to promote maintaining a healthy weight. So, instead of trying to find ways to make these yourself at home, I would suggest replacing these foods with whole vegetables, whole fruits, and relatively unprocessed grains. So, I'm talking about a rolled oat, for example, or a air-popped popcorn that you might pop yourself at home.

Lauren Larson: And the evidence does not really support avoiding all high-fat foods for weight control or lowering cancer risk; it's really just these highly processed high-fat food, like maybe fried food, that should be reduced.

Gina: Okay. And the quality of the oils they use are not very good usually, either. They use those really inexpensive peanut oils, canola oils, soybean oils...

Lauren Larson: Number five is to limit the consumption of red and processed meat. Red meat is considered beef, pork, and lamb, which is interesting because of all the ads that we've seen about pork being "the other white meat." But when it comes to cancer prevention, beef, pork, and lamb are all considered red meats, and the goal would be to limit those to no more than 12 to 18 ounces per week. So, if you're not quite sure what an ounce of meat looks like, trying to imit it to no more than three portions a week is a little bit more understandable, shall we say.

Lauren Larson: And when it comes to processed meat, these are meats that are preserved by smoking, curing, salting, or the addition of chemical preservatives. This would include your bacon, your ham, your sausage, your hot dogs, your salami. Also includes things like deli turkey and deli chicken, which we sometimes don't put in this category. And there is some debate about... I'm sure you've seen, Gina, maybe deli turkey that says, "Contains no added nitrates," and then there's a little asterisk, and it says, "Except for those naturally occurring in celery juice or celery powder." Have you seen that?

Gina: Yes! Yes. I actually ate some yesterday.

Lauren Larson: It's very confusing to consumers, and there's still some debate about this, but from what I've seen discussed kind of among the cancer nutrition community is that these types of processed meats, with these celery or kind of nitrate alternatives, are also considered harmful or in this category of increasing cancer risk, and it's particularly colorectal cancer that these processed meats are linked to.

Gina: Do you know why that is? Like, what causes that with [inaudible 00:26:06]?

Lauren Larson: Yeah. It has something to do with... the heat processing of the meat, the compounds in the meat, and the nitrate. So, it's the combination of those two together. If you were to eat a cooked chicken breast that you, say, cooked on your stove-top along with some celery, you wouldn't have the same effect, is my understanding.

Gina: Okay.

Lauren Larson: It's when the two are put together, and then they're cooked at a high temperature, that these kind of carcinogenic compounds are developed.

Gina: I wanted to ask you, sorry about that, I wanted to ask you about the high-protein diets, and the keto phase that we're going through. Lots of meat, lots of red meat. What are your thoughts on that?

Lauren Larson: Right. When it comes to cancer prevention, like I just mentioned, it really is advisable to limit red and processed meats, which the keto diet is typically pretty high in. It doesn't have to be! You can do a keto diet with lean chicken and turkey breast. And then, also, I guess if you were to increase your intake of non-starchy vegetables, and some of those heart-healthy fats, you could create a quote-unquote "healthier" keto diet.

Lauren Larson: But it is often pretty difficult and pretty challenging, and as a dietician, I never recommend that anyone start to diet that they can't picture themselves doing for their lifetime.

Gina: Yes.

Lauren Larson: And the keto, I think, is just really hard to stick with, and I also... the thing that a lot of people don't realize with keto, too, is you can't really cheat because in order for the diet to be effective, you have to stay in the ketosis state. And by cheating, even if it's just once a week, and if you have more carbs or you have some alcohol, for example, you bring your body out of that state of ketosis, and so, then it basically kind of ruins the whole thing, I think.

Lauren Larson: And so, then you end up eating this high-fat, high-meat diet, but you're not in ketosis, and we already know that the research really does not support that high intake of meat and high fat when it comes to heart health and longevity.

Gina: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah, I completely agree. And any diet that doesn't allow me to have a glass of wine or birthday cake is not my friend.

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: You can just stay away from me with that. Or the fake keto birthday cake is not okay.

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: Yeah.

Lauren Larson: That's the hard-to-stick-with part. It's just not. the way... the culture we live in, the environment we live in, it's just not a setup for that.

Gina: Yes, absolutely. So, what percentage of protein in one's diet would you consider a good amount?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, so, that's a good question. The American Institute of Cancer Research has put together what they're calling the New American Plate, and it's similar to the My Plate that you may have seen, which is kind of the newer Food Pyramid.

Gina: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Lauren Larson: And basically, what they suggest is making two-thirds or your plate full of a variety of nutrient-dense plant foods. So, that's going to be your fruits, your vegetables, preferably the non-starchy ones, also a variety of whole grains that are minimally processed. So, choosing things like brown rice and quinoa over a wheat bread more often. Although wheat bread is still a good part of this diet.

Lauren Larson: And then also, nuts and seeds and beans, and lentils. Filling up two-thirds of your plate with those, kind of on average, and kind of getting some variety within there is key. Then, the other third of the plate can be a lean animal protein if you choose. Of course, if you choose to be vegan or vegetarian and have your whole plate plant food, that's also cancer-preventative. But adding a little bit of animal protein, if you feel like that's what works best for you, as long as you're choosing a lean, primarily white meat staying underneath the 12 of 18 ounces of red meat each week, it can kind of fit. Basically, about a third of your diet can come from a lean protein source.

Gina: Okay. Interesting. Because you'll see a lot of the macro-counting, or just body-building calculations, recommend these really high grams of protein.

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: So, I would guess with that amount on your plate, it would only be maybe 60 grams a day. 60, 70? Somewhere around there.

Lauren Larson: Yeah, it's probably going to be on the more modest side, you're right. But just remember, too, that we get protein from plant food like beans and nuts and seeds, and so, when those are on the plate as well, or kind of within your meal pattern, then you're going to be getting some protein from those sources, too.

Gina: Oh, okay. That's really good to remind everyone, because I forget about that myself, and an artichoke has six or eighth grams of protein. So, you can easily get protein through plants, too.

Lauren Larson: Yeah. So, next is number six. Number six is to limit your consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages, and that's not because there's a direct cancer risk between sugar-sweetened beverages and cancer, but more so to prevent any weight gain or becoming overweight or obese. So, the recommendation would be to drink mostly water and unsweetened beverages, like unsweetened iced tea, coffee, as well as those LaCroix or soda waters that are so popular right now, or even...

Lauren Larson: We have a soda stream, and so, we just make our soda water at home, and then it's just water. There's no natural flavor or any artificial sweeteners in that.

Gina: Oh, that's fun! And you can kind of flavor it yourself, then, too, huh?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, you could. You could do some fresh lemon or lime or, yeah, if you had orange. You can do that, as well.

Gina: Yes! Would you say that sugar intake is related to cancer risk, though? Say someone drinks four Cokes a day, but they're a healthy weight. What would you say about that?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, yeah. So, there is a thought of misinformation out there about this, quote-unquote, "sugar feeds cancer." And that's really a whole nother deep topic and discussion, but if someone is a healthy weight, there is such a thing as kind of, quote-unquote, "skinny obesity."

Gina: Yes.

Lauren Larson: So, if someone is consuming high amounts of sugar-sweetened beverages, there's a pretty good chance that even though they look a healthy weight on the outside, on the inside, they could have extra accumulation of kind of fat around their organs and their other tissues, and this isn't necessarily health-promoting, either. And I can't really comment on the specific relationship between cancer risk and that, but we do know that even if someone is lean and they have those extra kind of fat hanging around, it's not...

Gina: Yeah.

Lauren Larson: Going to be good for their health.

Gina: Yeah, it's a deep, visceral fat around your organs.

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: Yes.

Lauren Larson: Number seven is going to be limit alcohol consumption, and this is something that actually has changed with the newest report. And the recommendation is, for cancer prevention, it is best not to drink alcohol, which, this is kind of contrary to the American Heart Association, which suggests that if you drink, drinking one to two drinks a day, so one for women, two for men, can be beneficial for heart health. But when it comes to cancer prevention, really, the evidence that alcohol is the cause of several different types of cancers is mounting, particularly breast cancer...

Gina: Let me take out my sad trombone right now...

Lauren Larson: I know, I know. It is sad. And you know, we're talking about 10 recommendations here. You can decide, based off of your family history and the rest of your lifestyle, how high you feel like your risk is. And you might decide, "Okay, I'm doing all these other things that help reduce my risk. If I have a glass of wine here and there, it might increase my risk a little bit, but it's going to be pretty nominal compared to some of the other things like maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active."

Gina: Got it.

Lauren Larson: So, my recommendation is if you're not drinking alcohol, there's no reason to start for cancer prevention, but if you do choose to drink alcohol, go with the recommendation from the American Heart Association, and choose to drink no more than one drink a day for women, and two drinks a day for men. And if you're pouring wine out of a bottle, or if you're drinking a heavy IPA, there's a pretty good chance that you might be drinking more than you think, so it would be a good idea to just... if this is something that really concerns you, just go online and kind of look up what is considered one drink.

Gina: That's a really good tip, because like you said, if you are pouring it out of the bottle, it's easy to just be like, "Eh, that's a glass," and it's a giant glass. But I'd only have it maybe two to three times a week now, and I find that I enjoy it a lot more. I look forward to it. We go out and I'll have a glass of wine, and I enjoy it. But like you said, there are so many things that used to go around saying to drink wine for heart health; if you're going to start drinking wine, maybe not do it for that reason.

Lauren Larson: Right, exactly. And like you, too, Gina, we cut back our alcohol intake to Not On School Nights, that's our rule.

Gina: Yeah!

Lauren Larson: And we've found that, both my husband and I, we feel so much better in the morning. We're more likely to get up in the morning and exercise, we are more likely to get through our workday without too much drowsiness and fatigue, and then when the weekend comes, it really is a reward, and it just feels so much more enjoyable than if we were to kind of consume it throughout the week.

Gina: Yes, absolutely, and I feel like I sleep better.

Lauren Larson: Yes.

Gina: I wake up and I actually feel rested, I don't feel tired, and the nights that I do have a glass of wine, I definitely notice that I'm more sluggish in the mornings.

Lauren Larson: Yes, yes. So true. On to number eight. Number eight is to not use supplements for cancer prevention. Really, the goal is to aim to meet all the nutritional needs through diet alone rather than taking, for example, a green tea supplement or a resveratrol supplement or a tumeric supplement; those are some of the ones that kind of have been touted for cancer prevention. Because really, what we've learned is that these beneficial compounds work best when they're packaged up within the food that they were contained in. And that's when... our body has the best response to them, not when they are processed and split into a supplement capsule and then taken alone.

Lauren Larson: And oftentimes, there's kind of what's called a U- or a J-shaped dose response curve. So, there's this optimal amount that is typically found in food that provides the most benefits, and then when you kind of supplement or go beyond that amount, the benefits slowly decline.

Gina: Speaking of supplements, and because you live in Colorado, I would love to hear your thoughts on CBD.

Lauren Larson: That's a really great question, and when I was just at the cancer center yesterday, we had our survivorship meeting to kind of plan for next year, and we really, really want to give our patients and our survivors a talk to talk all about CBD. But we are struggling to find a resource or a credible resource of someone who can come and give that education. And we ourselves don't feel educated enough to provide that.

Lauren Larson: So, unfortunately, I can't really answer that question, but I hope, over the next few years, that I will get the information to be able to, because it's just becoming so much more prevalent. We do have patients that use CBD as well as THC to help with pain management as well as increasing appetite, which is sometimes important when going through treatment.

Gina: So, after you do that, will you come back on the podcast and chat about CBD?

Lauren Larson: Sure, yeah, I'd love to!

Gina: Okay. Awesome.

Lauren Larson: It might be a while, though.

Gina: Yeah, sounds good.

Lauren Larson: Because there's still so much information that needs to be researched. Number nine is to breastfeed is possible. This obviously pertains to women only. Breastfeeding is good for both mother and baby for many reasons, and one of them is cancer prevention for both mom and baby. It's recommended that moms exclusively breastfeed for the first six months. Six months and longer provides greater protection against cancer.

Lauren Larson: Now, I am also a certified lactation counselor, so I realize this option isn't available to everyone for various reasons. Like you said at the beginning, Gina, if this wasn't an option for you, remember, there's 10 different steps here, so there's 10 different cancer-preventative suggestions that you can follow. And if this one just wasn't available to you, then that's okay.

Gina: Does it matter if it's pumped or not, or does it have to be directly breastfeeding? What if you gave them pumped in the bottle?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, that's a really good question. I would think that it would not matter because... but I don't know that we know exactly why breastfeeding is protective. I did read at one point a while back, something about when breastfeeding stops, something about the apoptosis or kind of the turnover of the cells inside the breast might be what's providing the protective effect.

Gina: Okay.

Lauren Larson: But I am honestly not up on the research enough to say if that's why, or if there's more research or more knowledge that we have now about the protection.

Gina: Got it.

Lauren Larson: Number 10 is if you've had a cancer diagnosis, it is recommended that you follow all of the above. So, numbers one through nine, and that's because, really, the research around survivorship is not as heavy or kind of in-depth as what we have for cancer prevention. So, it's just recommended that you follow all of the above, and you can also check with a doctor or health professional to just kind of determine what is best for you based off of your diagnosis.

Lauren Larson: That summarizes the 10 recommendations for cancer prevention.

Gina: So good! Thank you so much for bringing all of those down for us. Are there any recommendations that you can think of that aren't on that list?

Lauren Larson: Yes. These are kind of more of the obvious ones, things like not using tobacco and avoiding secondhand exposure to tobacco, as well as limiting sun exposure and/or using sun protection. So, Gina, I know you're a beauty counter consultant, and I am, as well, through you...

Gina: Yeah.

Lauren Larson: And so, you've talked before on the podcast and on your blog about using the Environmental Working Group's information on safe sunscreen to make sure that you're not choosing a sun protection that also contains harmful ingredients.

Gina: Mm-hmm (affirmative), absolutely, and then of course, using safer personal care products when you can, cleaner cleaning products when you can.

Lauren Larson: Right.

Gina: Using the app is so helpful, though, because I use it just to scan something new before I buy it, and then I know right away if it's a good choice or not. But, yeah, it makes it easy when you run out of things. Are there any other things that you can think about that aren't on the list?

Lauren Larson: Those are the main ones that I think had the most research behind them.

Gina: Okay. Good to know. What would you say is the best way to eat for cancer prevention?

Lauren Larson: Yeah. I kind of mentioned this a little bit when we were talking about red and processed meats, and then proteins. I'll just quickly reiterate it. So, the American Institute of Cancer Research recommends two-thirds of the plate coming from a variety of plant foods, and then a third of the plate coming from lean protein foods. And I'll just add a comment here, that variety is super important because all of the different colors and textures provide different nutrients for our bodies, and so, eating a variety of colorful peppers and onions, red, yellow, broccoli, cauliflower, orange sweet potatoes, carrots, black beans, kidney beans, garbanzo beans, brown rice...

Lauren Larson: All of these different colors and varieties provide different nutrients and antioxidants, and different phytonutrients that help promote cancer prevention.

Gina: Okay. So, eat the rainbow, basically!

Lauren Larson: Exactly.

Gina: Have you heard of the book How To Not Die?

Lauren Larson: I have heard that. Is that the one by Michael Greger?

Gina: I don't know. This is terrible, I don't know who the author is, but I have the cookbook, and it's very much in line with all of the recommendations that you're talking about.

Lauren Larson: Oh! Yes.

Gina: Yeah, so, really great, super healthy recipes in there.

Lauren Larson: Yeah, yeah, and I actually... He has a app, as well, that gives you a checklist that you can kind of check off based off of what you do and eat throughout the day, and kind of just to assess where you fall with his recommendations. And I think you could do the same with these cancer-preventative recommendations, and I also believe that they kind of overlap quite a bit.

Gina: I think you're absolutely right. Yeah, he recommends just printing it out and putting it on your fridge, and then when you go to make a meal or a snack, you'll be like, "Oh, I haven't had any nuts today," or, "I need to have one more serving of fruit today." So, I feel like it makes it very... Yeah, it is by Michael Greger, I just Googled it, but it just makes it very easy. And so, same thing! You could print out the list of 10 prevention strategies and just keep that in mind.

Gina: But how can listeners assess their own cancer risk?

Lauren Larson: Yeah, so, the American Institute of Cancer Research developed this resource called The Cancer Health Check, and it's a website, and I can give you that site to include in the show notes, but it's a website where you can assess your lifestyle against known risk factors.

Gina: Okay.

Lauren Larson: And it also provides changes that you can make to start following these evidence-based cancer recommendations now.

Gina: Amazing. So, it's kind of like a quiz, then? You fill out the quiz and it tells you what to do?

Lauren Larson: Exactly.

Gina: Thank you so much for sharing all of those amazing tips, and I will include everything in the show notes so that you guys can find it. And if you guys have questions for Lauren, just leave them in the blog post associated with this episode, and I would be happy to pass them along for you.

Gina: Oh, thank you so much for being on the show today. It was so great having you here.

Lauren Larson: Yeah, I've been a longtime reader of your blog, so I feel pretty fortunate to be on the show with you.

Gina: Yes! I was so happy to speak to you, and thanks again for all of your amazing tips. And for the work that you're doing. It's really incredible.

Lauren Larson: Thanks.

Speaker 2: Thanks for listening to The Healthy In Real Life Podcast. For more info, check out Gina's blog at Fitnessista.com.