

## Take Control of Your Health and Help Reduce Your Cancer Risk

You can reduce your risk of cancer by making healthy choices like eating right, staying active, and not smoking. It is also very important to follow recommended screening guidelines, which can help detect certain cancers early.

This month we highlight the importance of prevention and early detection, and focus on other ways to stay healthy and reduce your cancer risk. Review the spotlight to learn more about cancer prevention and early detection, and complete the monthly quiz for a chance to win a \$25 gift card.



### Cancer Prevention

Cancer prevention is action taken to lower the risk of getting cancer. This can include maintaining a healthy lifestyle, avoiding exposure to known cancer-causing substances, and taking medicines or vaccines that can prevent cancer from developing. In 2018, an estimated 1.7 million people will be diagnosed with cancer in the United States. In addition to the physical problems and emotional distress caused by cancer, the high costs of care are also a burden to patients, their families, and to the public. By preventing cancer, the number of new cases of cancer is lowered. So if you're concerned about cancer prevention, take comfort in the fact that some simple lifestyle changes can make a big difference. Consider these seven cancer prevention tips.

### Don't Use Tobacco

Using any type of tobacco puts you on a collision course with cancer. Smoking has been linked to various types of cancer — including cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, larynx, pancreas, bladder, cervix and kidney. Chewing tobacco has been linked to

cancer of the oral cavity and pancreas. Even if you don't use tobacco, exposure to secondhand smoke might increase your risk of lung cancer.

Avoiding tobacco — or deciding to stop using it — is one of the most important health decisions you can make. It's also an important part of cancer prevention. If you need help quitting tobacco, ask your doctor about stop-smoking products and other strategies for quitting.

### **Eat A Healthy Diet**

Although making healthy selections at the grocery store and at mealtime can't guarantee cancer prevention, it might help reduce your risk. Consider these guidelines:

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables. Base your diet on fruits, vegetables and other foods from plant sources — such as whole grains and beans.
- Avoid obesity. Eat lighter and leaner by choosing fewer high-calorie foods, including refined sugars and fat from animal sources.
- If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation. The risk of various types of cancer — including cancer of the breast, colon, lung, kidney and liver — increases with the amount of alcohol you drink and the length of time you've been drinking regularly.
- Limit processed meats. A report from the International Agency for Research on Cancer, the cancer agency of the World Health Organization, concluded that eating large amounts of processed meat can slightly increase the risk of certain types of cancer.

### **Maintain A Healthy Weight And Be Physically Active**

Maintaining a healthy weight might lower the risk of various types of cancer, including cancer of the breast, prostate, lung, colon and kidney. Physical activity counts, too. In addition to helping you control your weight, physical activity on its own might lower the risk of breast cancer and colon cancer. Adults who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits. But for substantial health benefits, strive to get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic physical activity. You can also do a combination of moderate and

vigorous activity. As a general goal, include at least 30 minutes of physical activity in your daily routine — and if you can do more, even better.

### **Protect Yourself From The Sun**

Skin cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer — and one of the most preventable. Try these tips:

- Avoid midday sun. Stay out of the sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., when the sun's rays are strongest.
- Stay in the shade. When you're outdoors, stay in the shade as much as possible. Sunglasses and a broad-brimmed hat help, too.
- Cover exposed areas. Wear tightly woven, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much of your skin as possible. Opt for bright or dark colors, which reflect more ultraviolet radiation than pastels or bleached cotton.
- Don't skimp on sunscreen. Use generous amounts of sunscreen when you're outdoors, and reapply often.
- Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps. These are just as damaging as natural sunlight.

### **Get immunized**

Cancer prevention includes protection from certain viral infections. Talk to your doctor about immunization against:

- Hepatitis B. Hepatitis B can increase the risk of developing liver cancer. The hepatitis B vaccine is recommended for certain high-risk adults.
- Human papillomavirus (HPV). HPV is a sexually transmitted virus that can lead to cervical and other genital cancers as well as squamous cell cancers of the head and neck. The HPV vaccine is recommended for girls and boys ages 11 and 12. It is also available to both men and women age 26 or younger who didn't have the vaccine as adolescents.

### **Get Regular Medical Care**

Regular self-exams and screenings for various types of cancers — such as cancer of the skin, colon, cervix and breast — can increase your chances of discovering cancer

early, when treatment is most likely to be successful. Ask your doctor about the best cancer screening schedule for you.

**Take cancer prevention into your own hands, starting today. The rewards will last a lifetime.**

## **Guidelines for the Early Detection of Cancer**

The American Cancer Society recommends these cancer screening guidelines for most adults. Screening tests are used to find cancer before a person has any symptoms.

### **Breast Cancer**

- **Women ages 40 to 44** should have the choice to start annual breast cancer screening with mammograms (x-rays of the breast) if they wish to do so.
- **Women age 45 to 54** should get mammograms every year.
- **Women 55 and older** should switch to mammograms every 2 years, or can continue yearly screening.
- Screening should continue as long as a woman is in good health and is expected to live 10 more years or longer.
- **All women** should be familiar with the known benefits, limitations, and potential harms linked to breast cancer screening.

### **Colon And Rectal Cancer And Polyps**

For people at average risk for colorectal cancer, the American Cancer Society recommends starting regular screening at **age 45**. This can be done either with a sensitive test that looks for signs of cancer in a person's stool (a stool-based test), or with an exam that looks at the colon and rectum (a visual exam). Talk to your health care provider about which tests might be good options for you, and to your insurance provider about your coverage. No matter which test you choose, the most important thing is to get screened.

### **Cervical Cancer**

- **Cervical cancer testing should start at age 21.** Women under age 21 should not be tested.

- **Women between the ages of 21 and 29** should have a Pap test done every 3 years. HPV testing should not be used in this age group unless it's needed after an abnormal Pap test result.
- **Women between the ages of 30 and 65** should have a Pap test plus an HPV test (called "co-testing") done every 5 years. This is the preferred approach, but it's OK to have a Pap test alone every 3 years.
- **Women over age 65** who have had regular cervical cancer testing in the past 10 years with normal results should not be tested for cervical cancer. Once testing is stopped, it should not be started again. Women with a history of a serious cervical pre-cancer should continue to be tested for at least 20 years after that diagnosis, even if testing goes past age 65.

Screening increases the chances of detecting certain cancers early, when they might be easier to treat. Schedule an appointment with your doctor today if you are due for a cancer screening.