

PREVENT CANCER MONTH

TWO-THIRDS OF ALL CANCERS ARE PREVENTABLE

Cancer is caused by either genetic mutations or by choices we make within our lives that force harm on our bodies, and sometimes both. Scientists have been making progress in the area of genetic research, but it's in the area of prevention through proper life choices where we can make the most impact now.

The choices we make, the foods we eat, and the exercise we get or don't get – can do just as much, if not more, to increase or decrease our risk of getting certain cancers than inherited genetics could ever do. Continue reading to learn more about some of the most preventable cancers and what you can do to prevent them or catch them at their earliest and most treatable stages.

Reduce Your Risk!

You can reduce your risk for cancer. It is one of the most preventable life-threatening diseases facing Americans today.

Research has shown that up to two-thirds of cancer deaths are caused by smoking, physical inactivity and poor diet choices. You can significantly **reduce your risk** for cancer by:

- Improving your diet
- Increasing your physical activity
- Quitting smoking
- Getting recommended screenings

Get Smart!

Don't Use Tobacco

Tobacco use is by far the worst health choice you can make. It is deadly and causes cancers of the lung, throat, mouth and esophagus, in addition to heart disease, emphysema and many other smoking-related health problems.

Protect Your Skin from the Sun

Skin cancer is the most common—but preventable—cancer in the United States, affecting more than one million people each year. What can you do to reduce your risk for skin cancer?

- Avoid exposure to the sun between 10 am and 4 pm. If you have to go out, wear protective clothing.
- Always wear sunscreen with SPF 15 or higher, no matter your skin color. Exposure to the sun causes most skin cancer, including melanoma, the most deadly type.
- Protect your children's skin as well as your own. Most damage occurs in childhood when cells in all skin layers are still developing.

Practice Safer Sex

Cervical cancer is linked to the human papillomavirus (HPV). Women with HPV—a sexually transmitted virus—are at increased risk of getting cervical cancer. After becoming sexually active, but no later than age 21, women should begin regular screening to detect pre-cancerous or abnormal changes in the cervix.

Public health recommendations now include the HPV vaccine for girls age 11 and 12: girls and young women should talk with their health care professionals about being vaccinated.

Limit Alcohol Consumption

Recent studies on food and cancer prevention have noted that drinking alcohol poses cancer risks but also provides some protection against coronary heart disease. If you are a man who drinks, have no more than two drinks a day. If you are a woman who drinks, have no more than one drink a day.

Get Fit!

Eat a Variety of Healthy Foods, Especially Fresh Fruit and Vegetables

Increasing evidence links the food people eat to cancer: some foods decrease cancer risks while others increase them. Research suggests that one-third of cancer diagnosed every year may be related to what people eat. Reduce dietary fat intake, especially animal fat, limit red meat and avoid processed meat, and make your diet rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, beans and whole grains.

Stay Active and Maintain a Healthy Weight

Add exercise to your routine to reduce stress, increase energy, control your weight and reduce your risk for cancer. Getting at least 30 minutes a day can make a big difference in your health and well-being. Inactivity or obesity have been linked to breast, colorectal and endometrial cancer, and there is also some limited evidence of links to lung, gallbladder, prostate and pancreatic cancer. Evidence shows that a high-fat diet along with lack of exercise seems to contribute to the development of some cancerous tumors, especially those in which hormones play a role.

How can exercise help? First, physical activity can help you control your weight. It can also help your digestive system function properly, boost your immune system and also have a positive effect on hormones.

Get Checked!

Follow Cancer-Screening Guidelines

There are many tests that can help detect cancer early. Ask your health care professional which screening tests you should have and when. ***Be sure to show them your family history.*** The following cancers are preventable through proper screenings.

Breast Cancer – Annual mammogram at age 35-40, self/clinical exams monthly from age 21.

Cervical Cancer – Annual Pap test at age 21, HPV Vaccine, safe sex.

Colorectal Cancer – Colonoscopy before symptoms, generally beginning at age 50.

Lung Cancer – no screening, but symptoms are persistent cough, chest pain, weight loss and loss of appetite, chronic bronchitis or pneumonia.

Skin Cancer – Check your skin each month for suspicious growths: **A**symmetry, **B**order irregularity, **C**olor that is not uniform, **D**iameter greater than 6 mm (about the size of a pencil eraser), **E**volving size, shape or color. If you discover a suspicious growth, see your physician.

Oral Cancer – Men are diagnosed with oral cancer more than twice as often as women. Be sure to see a dentist for regular exams.

Prostate Cancer – Men with a family history of prostate cancer (a father or brother with prostate cancer more than doubles the risk). Screened during routine check-ups with your doctor using PSA testing and a physical exam.

Testicular Cancer – Examined at routine check-ups with your doctor, monthly self-exams.

Want to Learn More?

Prevent Cancer Foundation
www.preventcancer.org

American Cancer Society
www.cancer.org

Prevention Magazine
www.prevention.com

Source: Prevent Cancer Foundation; American Cancer Society; Center for Disease Control