



6 Cancer-Preventing Tips to Incorporate in Everyday Life

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How to Prevent Cancer

Although some cancers are genetic or happen as a result of getting older, you can reduce the risk of other causes by making small lifestyle changes. The World Health Organization estimate that 30% to 50% of cancers can be prevented, so it is vital to know what the risk factors are.

In this article we will look at how to prevent cancer with seven techniques.

1. Give Up Smoking

The biggest single lifestyle change you can make to prevent cancer is to avoid tobacco products. Smoking-related cancers kill over 8 million people worldwide per year, which is a massive number of avoidable deaths.

Lung cancer is the deadliest cancer in the U.S., and 80% to 90% of lung cancers are caused by smoking. Second-hand smoke is also a killer, with non-smoking adults who are passively exposed to cigarette smoke being 20% to 30% more likely to develop lung cancer, according to the CDC.

As well as lung cancer, cigarette smoking also causes other forms of the disease, including mouth, throat, stomach, esophagus and colon cancer. It's not really a big surprise as tobacco smoke contains over 7,000 chemicals, of which at least 69 are known to cause cancer.

2. Avoid UV Light

The most common cancer in the U.S. is skin cancer, and exposure to ultraviolet rays from the sun and sunbeds is the main cause. Melanoma, basal cell carcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma are all types of skin cancer caused by radiation from the sun.

To help prevent skin cancer, an Australian health campaign by SunSmart in 1981 devised three simple rules: slip, slap, slop. These have since expanded into five Ss with the addition of seek and slide.

These stand for:

- Slip on a shirt
- Slap on sunscreen
- Slop on a hat
- Seek shade
- Slide on some sunglasses

Australia has one of the highest skin cancer rates in the world, with two-thirds of the population likely to receive a melanoma diagnosis by the age of 70. The SunSmart campaign was extremely successful in raising awareness

and skin cancer rates among younger people, as they have been dropping by around 5% per year according to Melanoma Research Victoria.

3. Eat a Healthy Diet

The links between what you eat and whether you are more likely to get cancer are complex. Mayo Clinic explains the issues well, explaining that avoiding meat is not necessarily reducing your risk. Maintaining a healthy BMI is key, and as vegetarians and vegans generally consume fewer calories, it may be that which makes the biggest difference.

Eating a lot of red and processed meat does certainly increase the risk of colorectal cancers. Eating plenty of fruit and vegetables provides phytochemicals which may help prevent cancer. Fiber is important for cancer prevention, for both breast cancer as well as colorectal cancer.

4. Be More Active

As maintaining a healthy weight is key to cancer prevention, as well as having a good diet, it is important to be active. Walking for just 30 minutes per day, five times per week, or exercising more vigorously for 75 minutes per week, is enough to reduce the risk of 13 different cancers. These include colon, breast, endometrial, liver and stomach cancer.

Increasing daily activity not only helps maintain a healthy BMI, but it also lowers insulin and estrogen, which can cause certain cancers. According to the American Cancer Society, exercise also boosts the immune system and improves overall quality of life.

My breast surgeon recommended power walking for reducing the risk of secondary breast cancer, so I try to walk most days for 45 minutes.

5. Avoid Air Pollution

Pollution from exhaust fumes and other gases is linked to a higher cancer risk, mainly from lung cancer. Indoor air pollution from radon is also a cancer risk, particularly if you also smoke.

Being aware of any potential air pollution, both inside and outside, and avoiding it whenever possible is advised.

6. Avoid Radiation

Radiation from medical scanning equipment and x-rays increases the risk of cancer, although it is very small. Doctors generally only recommend these types of diagnostic tests if they are necessary, particularly where the benefit of the test outweighs the cancer risk.

Other Factors to Keep in Mind

Occupation Factors

Some jobs increase your exposure to cancer-causing substances such as chemicals and dust. Harmful chemicals include formaldehyde, asbestos and arsenic. Those who work in the nuclear industry can be exposed to radiation, and even furniture makers are at an increased risk of cancer from breathing in harmful wood dust over a long period of time.

You can reduce the chances of getting cancer by wearing protective clothing and taking extra care when handling dangerous substances. Contaminated clothing must be carefully washed afterwards too, to protect members of your household.

Lifestyle Factors

Introducing healthier choices to your life could make a big difference to your risk of getting a cancer diagnosis, so here are some tips for small changes which will reduce the chances of getting this horrible disease:

- Swap one meaty meal per week for a plant-based dish
- Eat less processed meat, and red meat, swapping it for more chicken and fish
- Eat more fruit and vegetables, and add beans and lentils to your diet for added fiber
- If you smoke, speak to your doctor about programs which can help you give up
- Try to exercise for 30 minutes per day, even if it is just a quick walk
- Avoid the sun if you can, and if you do spend time outside use a high factor sunscreen, wear a hat and keep covered up as much as possible

Final Notes

While some cancers are unfortunately unavoidable, there are simple things you can do to reduce the risk of other cancers from developing. At the very least, you will end up living a healthy, active lifestyle, which helps boost your overall health in positive ways.

If you want more information about cancer prevention, be sure to speak with your doctor at your next check-up.