

July is Health Promoting Lifestyles for Cancer Prevention Month



What are health promoting lifestyles for cancer prevention?

Cancer is the second leading cause of death among Americans. One way to decrease your risk of developing cancer is adopting a healthy lifestyle. Researchers believe keeping a healthy lifestyle may help prevent many cancers. This includes maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active, managing stress, avoiding heavy or excess alcohol drinking, and not smoking. Avoiding exposure to cancer-causing agents (such as certain chemicals, lead and asbestos) and sun exposure that results in sunburns can also help prevent cancer.

What are the key statistics about cancer in the United States?

- It is estimated there will be 611,720 cancer deaths in 2024.
- Over a lifetime, about 42 out of 100 men and 40 out of 100 women will develop cancer.
- Cancer deaths have been on the decline since the early 1990's mostly due to reductions in smoking, treatment advances and early detection of certain cancers.

Who's at risk?

While everyone is at risk for cancer, some people are at greater risk than others. Age is the greatest risk factor for cancer. Nearly 88% of cancers are detected at age 50 and older and 57% are 65 or older. People who use tobacco, drink heavily, are not physically active, eat a poor diet, are regularly exposed to carcinogens (cancer causing agents) in their occupation, have prolonged and unprotected exposure to sunlight, or who have a family history are all at increased risk for certain cancers. Among racial/ethnic groups:

- African Americans have the highest overall cancer death rate.
- Hispanics/Latinos have higher rates of cancers associated with infection such as cancers of the uterine cervix, liver, and stomach.
- Asian and Pacific Islanders have the lowest overall cancer incidence and death but have higher rates of liver and stomach cancer.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives have higher incidence and death rates from kidney cancer.

How do I reduce my risk for cancer?

There are lifestyle changes you can make that may reduce your risk of developing cancer. These include:

- Stop the use of tobacco products such as cigarettes, chewing tobacco and vaping.
- Avoid excessive alcohol consumption.
- Increase physical activity.
- Maintain recommended weight.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Limit exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun.
- Engage in early detection and screening programs.

Diet and Health Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

Diet

Healthy eating is an important part of preventing cancer.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) recommends eating the following as part of a healthy diet:

- Foods that are high in nutrients, in amounts that help to achieve and maintain a healthy weight.
- A variety of vegetables, dark green, red and orange as well as legumes (beans and peas).
- Fruits, especially whole fruits with a variety of colors.
- Whole grains.

The ACS recommends limiting or eliminating:

- Red and processed meats
- Sugar-sweetened drinks
- Highly processed foods
- Refined-grain products

Smoking

Tobacco use is the most preventable cause of cancer occurrence and death in the United States. Avoiding tobacco products of any kind and quitting smoking are two major steps that can be taken to prevent cancer.

Sun Facts

The sun is needed for its light and warmth, but the sun's ultraviolet (UV) radiation can cause damage to your skin and eyes. This damage leads to premature aging of the skin and is the greatest risk factor for developing skin cancer. The damaging effects of UV radiation are present even when it's cloudy.

Sun exposure that is intense enough to cause sunburn increases a person's risk of developing skin cancer. Even UV exposure that does not cause sunburn can increase skin cancer risk.

Below are some steps to help protect against UV radiation from the sun:

- Avoid direct exposure to the midday sun (from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.).
- Wear long sleeves, long pants, and a hat with a wide brim when outside.
- Wear sunglasses that block UV rays. The label should specify that the lenses block at least 99 percent of UVA and UVB rays. Sunglasses can protect both the eyes and the skin around the eyes.
- Protect yourself from UV rays that can penetrate light clothing, windshields, and windows.
- Protect yourself from UV rays reflected by sand, water, snow, and ice.
- Help protect your skin by using a lotion, cream, or gel that contains sunscreen. Sunscreens with broad spectrum protection (against both UVA and UVB rays) and with sun protection factor (SPF) values of 30 or higher are recommended.
- Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps.

Stay Physically Active

According to the American Cancer Society, adults should get 150-300 minutes per week of moderate intensity activity or 75-150 minutes per week of vigorous intensity activity or a combination.

Benefits of regular exercise

- Reduces risk of heart disease
- Increases good cholesterol (High-Density Lipoprotein – HDL)
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces the risk of diabetes
- Reduces the risk of some cancers
- Helps maintain a healthy weight
- Improves muscle tone and strength
- Improves balance
- Relieves insomnia
- Reduces anxiety and stress
- Prevents/treats depression
- Boosts self-image

Examples of healthy exercise

You don't have to go to a gym to get the benefits from regular exercise. The following are examples of healthy exercise that can be done at or near home, for little or no cost:

- Walking
- Bicycle riding
- Stretching
- Jogging
- Hiking
- Gardening
- House cleaning
- Dancing
- Racquet sports
- Resistance exercises

Steps to start living a more active life

Here are some tips if you'd like to start living a more active life today:

Make exercise convenient

- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Walk short distances instead of driving
- Park a little farther from store entrances and walk

Make exercise fun

- Do activities that you find enjoyable
- Get an exercise partner

Find indoor options when weather is too cold or hot

- Mall walking
- Aerobic exercise videos
- Stationary bike
- Treadmill
- Dancing

Remember to start off slowly and set realistic goals.

Cancer Prevention Trials at Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey

If you would like information about clinical trials for preventing cancer, please call Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey's Office of Human Research Services at 732-235-7356. For additional information about nationwide cancer prevention trials, you can call the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4 CANCEER or visit their website at www.cancer.gov.

Where can I find further information?

Rutgers Cancer Institute Resource and Learning Center
732-235-9639
www.cinj.org/rlc

Provides reliable, relevant and current information about all aspects of cancer.

National Cancer Institute
1-800-4-CANCER
www.cancer.gov

The American Cancer Society
1-800-ACS-2345
www.cancer.org

American Institute for Cancer Research
1-800-843-8114
www.aicr.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/index.htm

National Institute of Health
301-496-4000
www.nih.gov

U.S. Preventative Services Task Force
www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org



RLC website QR code. Scan with smartphone / device.