

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 608,570 cancer deaths in 2021.
- Over a lifetime, about 1 in 3 men and 1 in 3 women will develop cancer.
- Cancer deaths have been on the decline since the early 1990's.

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, since nearly 87% of cancers are detected at age 50 and older. Also, 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, or have prolonged and unprotected exposure to sunlight are all at increased risk for certain cancers. Among racial/ethnic groups:

- African Americans are more likely to develop and die from cancer.
- 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 mortality but have higher rates of liver and stomach cancer.
- American Indians and Alaska Natives have a higher incidence and mortality 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.
- Consume 5 to 9 servings per day of fruits and vegetables.
- Engage in early detection and screening programs.
- Ask your healthcare provider about how you can get involved in cancer prevention trials.

Diet and Health Guidelines for Cancer Prevention

Diet

Healthy eating is an important part of preventing cancer. The American Cancer Society recommends the following as part of a healthy diet:

Eat a variety of healthy foods, with an emphasis on plant sources.

- Plant sources include grains, fruits, vegetables, soy, and other non-meat foods.

Eat five to nine servings of vegetables and fruits each day.

- Include vegetables and fruits at every meal and snack.
- Limit french fries, snack chips, and other fried vegetable products.
- Choose 100% juice if you drink fruit or vegetable juices.

Choose whole grains instead of processed (refined) grains and sugars.

- Include whole grain rice, bread, pasta, and cereals.
- Limit consumption of refined carbohydrates, including pastries, sweetened cereals, soft drinks, and sugars.

Limit consumption of red meats, especially those processed and high in fat.

- Choose fish, poultry, or beans as an alternative to beef, pork, and lamb.
- When you eat meat, select lean cuts and smaller portions.
- Prepare meat by baking, broiling, or poaching, rather than by frying, charcoal grilling or smoking.

Choose foods that help maintain a healthful weight.

- When eating out, choose food low in fat, calories, and sugar and avoid large portions.
- Eat smaller portions of high-calorie foods. Be aware that “low fat” or “fat free” does not mean “low calorie”. Low-fat cakes, cookies, and similar foods are often high in calories due to high sugar content.

Smoking

Studies show that tobacco products in any form (for example cigarettes, vaping and chewing tobacco) are a major cause of lung, head and neck cancers. The earlier you start using tobacco, the greater your risk for developing cancer and other health problems. Avoiding tobacco 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.

Protection from the damaging rays of the sun

- Limiting exposure to the damaging UV radiation of the sun is the best way to prevent skin cancer.
- Avoid direct exposure to the sun between 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m.
- Use sunscreen. The American Cancer Society recommends that you use a sunscreen with a sun protective factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Apply the sunscreen to any part of the body that is not protected by clothing. Sunscreen must be reapplied throughout the day in order to be effective.
- Wear protective clothing -- cover up with a wide-brimmed hat, long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Beware of cloudy days. You can get burned just as easily on a cloudy day as a sunny day.
- Do not use sunlamps or tanning beds.

Stay Physically Active

According to the American Cancer Society, adults should engage in moderate-intensity physical activities for at least 150 minutes spread throughout each week.

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 colon, prostate and breast 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

Prevention trials are research studies designed to answer important questions about the early detection and prevention of cancer. People who have certain health conditions may be able to participate in some of these trials. You can be part of our program to prevent cancer by participating in one of these trials. Participation in research studies can help us prevent and find cures for cancer.

If you are interested in participating in a cancer prevention trial, you can call Rutgers Cancer Institute of New Jersey at 732-235-8675. For additional information about nationwide cancer prevention trials, you can call the National Cancer Institute at 1-800-4 CANCER or visit their web site 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.