

Cancer Prevention

Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the United States. Research from the World Health Organization (WHO) shows that 30–50% of all cancer cases are preventable through everyday lifestyle changes.¹ In fact, evidence suggests that these changes in lifestyle, including smoking, diet, and physical inactivity can decrease your risk of cancer by up to one-third.² Here we cover approaches to cancer prevention that can easily be incorporated into daily life.

Avoid Tobacco Products

Stopping smoking and using tobacco products is the most effective way to reduce cancer risk.³ Approximately 80% to 90% of lung cancer deaths in the U.S. are linked to smoking.⁴ Even being exposed to secondhand smoke can increase the risk. In addition to damaging the lungs, tobacco use is a major cause of various other cancers.⁵ There are numerous support programs and nicotine replacement therapies that can help individuals stop smoking.

Eat a Healthy Diet

Studies have consistently shown that a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains can reduce the risk of various cancers. The American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) recommends that at least two-thirds of your plate should consist of plant-based foods.⁶ Additionally, it's recommended to limit red and processed meats, as they are associated with a higher risk of colorectal cancer.

Stay Active

Regular physical activity has been associated with a lower risk of several cancers, including breast, colon, and endometrial cancers.⁷ WHO recommends at least 30 minutes a day of moderate-intensity activity, such as biking, walking, or swimming, most days of the week.

Maintain a Healthy Weight

The American Cancer Society states that obesity causes almost 8% of all cancer cases and is linked to an increased risk of at least 13 types of cancer.⁸ Maintaining a healthy weight through proper nutrition and regular physical activity is essential for cancer prevention.

Limiting Alcohol

Moderate to heavy alcohol consumption has been linked to several types of cancers, including breast, liver, esophageal, and colorectal cancers.⁹ The AICR recommends limiting alcohol intake or avoiding it altogether for cancer prevention.¹⁰

Sun Protection

Protecting the skin from excessive sun exposure is important in preventing skin cancers. This includes using sunscreen, wearing protective clothing, and avoiding tanning beds.

Regular Screenings

Early detection through regular screenings can significantly improve cancer outcomes. Recommended screenings vary by age, gender, and risk factors but may include mammograms, colonoscopies, and pap smears. Certain types of cancer can be hereditary, meaning a family medical history, may increase your risk. Regular doctor visits and annual screenings are essential to detect any issues or identify precancerous conditions.

Get vaccinated

Several viruses have been linked to an increased chance of developing cancer, including hepatitis and Human Papillomavirus (HPV).¹¹ A hepatitis infection can lead to liver cancers. At the same time, HPV is associated with cervical cancers in addition to increasing the risk of anal, vaginal, and penile cancers. Talk with your doctor about recommended vaccines and get immunized to prevent these infections.

While not all cancers are preventable, these strategies can significantly reduce one's risk. In fact, according to a study published in Cancer Research, healthy lifestyle factors were associated with a decrease in the incidence of cancer, even in people with a high genetic risk.¹²

Evidence shows that even small lifestyle changes can add up to significant benefits in preventing cancer. By taking proactive steps and making healthy choices, it is possible to decrease the likelihood of developing cancer.

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