

Take Control of Your Health— and Help Reduce Your Cancer Risk



It's true. There are things you can do to help reduce cancer risk

There are choices you can make to help reduce your risk of getting cancer. Many of the things you can do to help prevent cancer help fight heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, too. The changes may be easier to make than you think.

Get to and stay at a healthy weight

Aim to be as lean as possible without being underweight throughout your life. If you are overweight or obese, losing even a few pounds will improve your health and is a good place to start. The best way to do this is to combine a healthy diet with plenty of regular physical activity.

Being overweight or obese is linked with an increased risk of developing several types of cancer (and other serious health problems). Overweight and obese people can lower their risk for these health problems by losing weight.

The right weight

Knowing your body mass index (BMI) can tell you if your weight is right for someone of your height. You can find your BMI by using our online calculator at www.cancer.org/bmi or by asking your health care provider.

Get moving

Physical activity can lower the risk of several types of cancer by helping you get to and stay at a healthy weight.

How much regular activity do I need?

- **Adults** should get 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week, or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity.
- **Children and adolescents** should get at least 1 hour of moderate- or vigorous-intensity activity each day.

Moderate activity is anything that makes you breathe as hard as you do during a brisk walk. During moderate activities, you'll notice a slight increase in heart rate and breathing. You should be able to talk, but not sing, during the activity.

Vigorous activities are performed at a higher intensity. They cause an increased heart rate, sweating, and a faster breathing rate.

Activities that improve strength and flexibility, such as weight lifting, stretching, or yoga, are also beneficial.

Have fun, and be fit

You can be active by walking briskly, swimming, gardening, doing housework, and even dancing! If you have children, be active with them.



Don't be a couch potato

Spend less time sitting or lying down and less time watching TV, playing video games, or using other forms of screen-based entertainment, like your cellphone.

Think about how much time you spend sitting, versus being active. Don't think you have time to add physical activity to your day? Consider simple substitutions. For instance:

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Walk or bike to your destination.
- Be active at lunch with your co-workers, family, or friends.
- Take a 20-minute activity break at work to stretch or take a quick walk.
- Wear a pedometer every day to increase your steps.

Follow a healthy eating pattern

A healthy eating pattern includes

- Foods that are high in nutrients in amounts that help you get to and stay at a healthy body weight
- A variety of vegetables – dark green, red and orange, fiber-rich legumes (beans and peas), and others
- Fruits, especially whole fruits with a variety of colors, whole grains.

A healthy eating pattern limits or does not include

- Red and processed meats
- Sugar-sweetened beverages
- Highly processed foods and refined-grain products



Here's an example of how much time it takes a 160-pound person to burn off a large order of fries (about 400 calories).

Activity	Minutes
Moderate Walking	95
Scrubbing Floors	89
Dancing	70
Bicycling	39
Running	28

Limit or avoid red and processed meats

- Limit or avoid processed meats such as bacon, sausage, luncheon meats, and hot dogs.
- Choose different plant-based foods. Try eating beans and peas instead of meat at a few meals each week.
- Limit or avoid red meat, select lean cuts, and eat smaller portions.
- Braise, roast, or cook poultry and fish without adding fats.

Eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables

Colorful vegetables and fruits and plant-based foods contain many natural health-promoting substances.

They contain important vitamins, minerals, phytochemicals, and antioxidants, and are usually low in calories. In general, those with the most color – green, red, yellow, and orange – have the most nutrients.

Eating plenty of vegetables and fruits each day may not be that hard to do when you think about it. Here are some suggestions:

1 side salad at lunch = 1 cup

1 medium piece of fruit = 1 cup

Juice at breakfast = ½ to 1 cup

Add fruit to your cereal; add lettuce and tomato to your sandwich at lunch; and have a salad and cooked vegetable with dinner.

Choose whole grains rather than refined-grain products.

- Choose whole-grain foods – such as whole-grain breads, pasta, and cereals (such as barley and oats), and brown rice over white rice.
- Limit how many refined carbohydrate foods you eat, such as pastries, candy, sweetened breakfast cereals, and other high-sugar foods.

It is best not to drink alcohol

Drinking alcohol can increase your cancer risk. People who do choose to drink alcohol should limit it to no more than 1 drink per day for women and 2 drinks per day for men.

Protect your skin

Most skin cancers can be prevented with proper sun protection. Follow these steps to help reduce your risk:

- Try to avoid the direct sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Instead, seek the shade.
- When you are in the sun, cover up with protective clothing.
- Use broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, even on hazy or overcast days.
- Cover your head with a wide-brimmed hat that shades your face, ears, and neck. If you choose a baseball cap, remember to protect your ears and neck with sunscreen.
- Wear sunglasses with 99% to 100% UV absorption to protect your eyes and the surrounding skin.
- Do not use tanning beds or tanning lamps.
- Know your skin. Be aware of all moles and spots on your skin, and report any changes to your health care provider right away.

Stay away from all forms of tobacco and tobacco smoke

There's no safe form of tobacco. If you smoke or chew tobacco, stop! Encourage the people around you to quit. Smoking increases cancer risk for people who smoke and everyone near them.

There's no safe level of secondhand smoke. Choose restaurants and other businesses that are smoke-free, and let owners of businesses that are not smoke-free know that secondhand smoke is harmful to your family's health.

If you need help quitting tobacco, please call us at **1-800-227-2345**.

Vaccinate to help protect against cancer

Vaccinating against human papillomavirus (HPV) can help protect against cancers related to HPV infection, including cervical, vaginal, vulvar, anal, penile and throat cancers.

The American Cancer Society recommends that girls and boys should get the HPV vaccine at ages 9 to 12. Children and young adults age 13 through 26 who have not been vaccinated, or who haven't gotten all their doses, should get the vaccine as soon as possible.

Know yourself and your risks

Your tobacco use, eating and exercise habits, and lifestyle help define your health and your risk for some diseases, such as cancer. You may be at increased risk for cancer because of the choices you make and because of your family history. Know yourself and your family history, and talk about these things with your health care provider.

Get regular check-ups

Many cancers can start to grow and spread without causing any symptoms. Regular screening tests can help find some cancers in their earliest stages – when they are small, have not spread, and may be easier to treat. Ask your health care provider about the American Cancer Society’s guidelines for early detection of cancer. Be aware of any changes in your body, do regular self-exams, and visit your health care provider regularly for cancer screening.



What you can do

- Stay away from tobacco.
- Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
- Follow a healthy eating pattern. Get plenty of fruits, veggies, and whole grains; and limit or avoid red/processed meats, sugary drinks and highly processed foods.
- Move more. Sit less.
- Avoid or limit alcohol.
- Protect your skin.
- Vaccinate your kids, and teach them healthy habits.
- Know yourself and your risks.
- Get regular check-ups.
- Talk to a health care provider about cancer screening tests.

There are things you can do to help decrease your cancer risk. To learn more, visit the American Cancer Society website at **www.cancer.org**, or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

