

Cancer prevention: 7 steps to reduce your risk

You've probably heard conflicting reports in the news about what can or can't help you in terms of cancer prevention. The issue of cancer prevention gets confusing — sometimes what's recommended in one report is advised against in another. What you can be sure of when it comes to cancer prevention is that making small changes to your everyday life might help reduce your chances of getting cancer. Try these seven cancer prevention steps.

Step 1: Don't use tobacco

All types of tobacco put you on a collision course with cancer. Rejecting tobacco, or deciding to stop using it, is one of the most important health decisions you can make for you and your family. It's also an important part of cancer prevention. Even if you don't smoke, reduce your exposure to secondhand smoke.

Step 2: Eat a variety of healthy foods

Though making healthy selections at the grocery store and at mealtime can't guarantee you won't get cancer, it may help reduce your risk. About 30 percent of cancers are related to issues of nutrition, including obesity.

The American Cancer Society recommends that you:

- Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day.
- Eat foods from other plant sources, such as whole grains and beans, several times a day. Green and dark yellow vegetables, beans, soybean products and cruciferous vegetables — such as broccoli, brussel sprouts and cabbage.
- Limit fat. Eat lighter and leaner by choosing fewer high-fat foods, particularly those from animal sources.

Step 3: Stay active and maintain a healthy weight

Maintaining a healthy weight and exercising regularly also may play a role in cancer prevention. Try to be physically active for 30 minutes or more on most days of the week.

Step 4: Protect yourself from the sun

Skin cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer — and one of the most preventable. Although repeated exposure to X-rays or contact with certain chemicals can play a role, sun exposure is by far the most common cause of skin cancer.

Step 5: Get immunized

Certain cancers are associated with viral infections that can be prevented with immunizations. Talk to your doctor about whether you would benefit from immunizations to reduce your risk of cancer.

Step 6: Avoid risky behaviors

Avoid risky behaviors that can lead to infections.

Step 7: Get screened

Regular screening and self-examination for certain cancers may not prevent cancer, but it can increase your chances of discovering cancer early — when treatment is more likely to be successful. If you notice any changes, see your healthcare provider.