

# The Plan for Staying Cancer-Free

by Suzanne Swearingen, DOM, AP

**W**e've all been touched by cancer, whether in our families, community or personally. We clamor to find a cure, and although cancer-related deaths have decreased, the overall occurrence has increased by 300% over the past 15 years. Using every resource available, some people have defeated cancer, but the most important tool we can employ is *prevention*.

Research by both the Mayo Clinic and Johns Hopkins Hospital has suggested that preventative measures can be successful in averting breast, uterine, ovarian and other types of cancers. According to the research, as many as one third of cancer cases are preventable. Cancer treatment is both complex and expensive; however, prevention can be cheap and relatively simple.

Below are 10 things you can do every day to reduce your risk of developing cancer:

✿ **Do not use tobacco** of any kind and avoid second-hand smoke. Tobacco use is linked to lung, cervical, pancreatic, kidney, bladder, mouth, throat and esophageal cancers.

✿ **Eat more vegetables, fruits, greens and grains** to lower the risk for colon, lung, esophageal and stomach cancers. Recent research has associated lowered breast cancer risk with consumption of cauliflower, Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage and kale.

✿ **Increase physical activity.** Exercise reduces risk of breast, uterine, prostate and colon cancers. Focused exercise for at least 30 minutes four to five days a week is recommended—and more is better. Check with your doctor before starting any vigorous program.

✿ **Sleep eight to nine hours regularly.** The body heals and regenerates during the sleep cycle. Adequate sleep also boosts immunity, which optimizes cell and organ function.

✿ **Limit or eliminate alcohol consumption.** Breast cancer in particular has been linked to alcohol consumption. Women and anyone over age of 65 are at a greater risk and should consume less than one ounce per day of alcohol.

✿ **Stay trim.** Excess weight predisposes the body to numerous health problems, including cancer. Reducing meat and processed foods is a good first step.

✿ **Avoid long-term Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT).** Evidence suggests a link between HRT and breast cancer. Try other options to control menopausal symptoms first, such as lifestyle changes, acupuncture and natural medicine, which can all be effective in managing menopausal symptoms. Birth control pills are also suspect, but there is no concrete

evidence linking current dosages to premenopausal breast cancer.

✿ **Avoid overuse of antibiotics.** Use only as recommended by your doctor for serious illness. Excessive use is linked to breast, ovarian, endometrial and stomach cancers.

✿ **Avoid exposure to pesticides.** Some pesticides have molecular structures which mimic estrogen and can bind to the body's estrogen receptor sites and increase the risk of breast, ovarian and testicular cancers. Try non-toxic herbal and natural pest repellants instead.

✿ **Reduce stress.** Stress is a precursor to many health problems because it lowers immune response and the body's ability to heal itself. Avoid hectic schedules and learn ways to manage stress. Stress has not been found to be a direct cause of cancer; however, it has been found to increase its growth and speed once it is present.

These basic lifestyle changes can reduce the risk of cancer and other health issues. Individuals who have a history of cancer or cancer in their family should seek professional guidance, and a qualified healthcare practitioner should help configure a program tailored to fit your life, your body and your abilities.

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