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Steps to Reducing Cancer Risk

While cancer prevention remains a developing field of study, researchers and medical professionals agree that certain lifestyle choices can affect an individual's cancer risk. Here are some widely accepted lifestyle tips to help improve your overall health and reduce your chance of developing cancer and other diseases:

Avoid tobacco. Research overwhelmingly shows that smoking or chewing tobacco is linked to many types of cancer, and that even secondhand smoke may increase risk of lung cancer.

Eat ample amounts of fruits and vegetables. The Mayo Clinic advises basing your diet on plant-based foods, including whole grains and beans, while limiting high-calorie foods, refined sugars, animal fats and processed meats.

Moderate or eliminate alcohol. If you choose to drink alcohol, Harvard Medical School recommends limiting intake to an average of one drink per day. Alcohol increases the risk of various cancers.

Maintain a healthy weight. Obesity increases the risk of many types of cancer and other health conditions. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9 falls within the healthy weight range.

Stay physically active. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity or 75 minutes of high-intensity physical activity each week, as well as engaging in strength-training exercises twice a week.

Avoid risky behaviors. Behaviors like unprotected sex and needle sharing can lead to infections that contribute to cancer, including hepatitis viruses, HIV, and the human papillomavirus.

Practice sun protection. According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, daily use of SPF 15 sunscreen can reduce the risk of developing squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) by about 40 percent, and lower melanoma risk by 50 percent.

Get vaccinated. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the HPV vaccine can prevent several kinds of cancer, and the hepatitis B vaccine can help prevent liver cancer.

Screen regularly. Annual exams with a doctor help determine appropriate cancer screenings for an individual's age and risk factors, and are an important part of safeguarding an individual's overall health.

Be mindful of your environment. Various studies have linked exposure to industrial and environmental toxins such as asbestos fibers, benzene, aromatic amines and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) to cancer.

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June is designated as National Cancer Survivor Month
- with June 7 named National Cancer Survivors Day
- to help raise awareness about living as a cancer survivor.
Several organizations offer free resources for survivors, their families, and caregivers.



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