



You Can't Wish Away Cancer

While there is no magic cure, there are steps you can take to reduce your risk of cancer. An estimated 18 percent of cancer cases and 16 percent of cancer deaths are attributable to the combined effects of excess body weight, alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and eating an unhealthy diet. The Mayo Clinic, the American Cancer Society, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) all offer advice that may help prevent cancer. Here are basic guidelines they all pretty much agree on:

Get regular medical care

Follow a cancer screening schedule recommended by your doctor. Regular self-exams and screenings for various types of cancers (such as cancer of the skin, colon, cervix and breast) can increase your chances of discovering cancer early, when treatment is most likely to be successful.

Eat a healthy, balanced diet

This can't guarantee cancer prevention, but it might reduce your risk. Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans, and limit processed meats. In addition, women who eat a Mediterranean diet supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil and mixed nuts might have a reduced risk of breast cancer.

Make good choices about alcohol consumption

The 2020 – 2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommends that adults of legal drinking age choose not to drink. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation. Moderate drinking is defined as limiting intake to two drinks or less in a day for men or one drink or less in a day for women.

The guidelines also suggest that nondrinkers not start drinking for any reason. The risk of various types of cancer — including cancer of the breast, colon, lung, kidney and liver — all increase with the amount of alcohol you drink and the length of time you've been drinking regularly.

Don't use tobacco

Using any type of tobacco puts you on a collision course with cancer. Smoking has been linked to various types of cancer, including cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, larynx, pancreas, bladder, cervix and kidney.

Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active

Maintaining a healthy weight might lower the risk of various types of cancer, including cancer of the breast, lung, colon and kidney. Participating in any amount of physical activity is beneficial for your health. Strive for 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity. In addition to helping you control your weight, physical activity on its own might lower the risk of breast cancer and colon cancer.

Protect yourself from the sun

Skin cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer — and one of the most preventable. Try these tips:

- Avoid midday sun.
- Stay in the shade.
- Wear tightly woven, loose-fitting clothing that covers as much of your skin as possible.
- Don't skimp on sunscreen. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, even on cloudy days.



Get vaccinated

Cancer prevention includes protection from certain viral infections. Talk to your doctor about vaccination against hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV). Hepatitis B can increase the risk of developing liver cancer. HPV is a sexually transmitted virus that can lead to cervical and other genital cancers, as well as squamous cell cancers of the head and neck.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month

It was founded by the American Cancer Society in October 1985 to promote mammography as the most effective means of fighting breast cancer. Recently, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) published new recommendations on when women should begin mammography exams. Speak with your doctor about what schedule is best for you.

The Mayo Clinic, the American Cancer Society, the CDC and the USPSTF are independent organizations that offer health information that you may find helpful.

