



Blog of the month - October 2015

### **What can you do to help prevent cancer?**

*How can you lower your chance of developing cancer? Get moving and eat well! Our blog this month spotlights an article from the American Cancer Society's website, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). It's a great reminder that eating better, watching your weight and moving more can indeed have a positive impact on your health, and can help reduce the risk of cancer. A lot of the information here is good common sense, but worth re-reading for National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.*

### **Diet and Physical Activity: What's the Cancer Connection?**

*Source: American Cancer Society*

How much do daily habits like diet and exercise affect your risk for cancer? Much more than you might think. Research has shown that poor diet and not being active are 2 key factors that can increase a person's cancer risk. The good news is that you can do something about this.

Besides quitting smoking, some of the most important things you can do to help reduce your cancer risk are:

- Get to and stay at a healthy weight throughout life.
- Be physically active on a regular basis.
- Make healthy food choices with a focus on plant-based foods.

The evidence for this is strong. Each year, about 589,430 Americans die of cancer; around one-third of these deaths are linked to poor diet, physical inactivity, and carrying too much weight.

### **Control your weight.**

Getting to and staying at a healthy weight is important to reduce the risk of cancer and other chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. Being overweight or obese increases the risk of several cancers, including those of the breast (in women past menopause), colon and rectum endometrium (the lining of the uterus), esophagus, pancreas, and kidney, among others.

Being overweight can increase cancer risk in many ways. One of the main ways is that excess weight causes the body to produce and circulate more estrogen and insulin, hormones that can stimulate cancer growth.

### **Be more active.**

Watching how much you eat will help you control your weight. The other key is to be more physically active. Being active helps reduce your cancer risk by helping with weight control. It can also help improve your hormone levels and the way your immune system works.

More good news – physical activity helps you reduce your risk of heart disease and diabetes, too! So grab your athletic shoes and head out the door!

The latest recommendations for adults call for at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity each week, or an equivalent combination, preferably spread throughout the week. This is over and above usual daily activities like using the stairs instead of the elevator at your office or doing housework. For kids, the recommendation is at least 60 minutes of moderate or vigorous intensity activity each day, with vigorous intensity activity occurring at least 3 days each week.

Moderate activities are those that make you breathe as hard as you would during a brisk walk. This includes things like walking, biking, even housework and gardening. Vigorous activities make you use large muscle groups and make your heart beat faster, make you breathe faster and deeper, and also make you sweat.

Being more physically active than usual, no matter what your level of activity, can have many health benefits.

### **Eat healthy foods.**

Eating well is an important part of improving your health and reducing your cancer risk. Take a good hard look at what you typically eat each day and try these tips to build a healthy diet plan for yourself and your family.

Choose foods and drinks in amounts that help you get to and maintain a healthy weight.

- Read food labels to become more aware of portion sizes and calories. Be aware that “low-fat” or “non-fat” does not necessarily mean “low-calorie.”
- Eat smaller portions when eating high-calorie foods.
- Choose vegetables, whole fruit, legumes such as peas and beans, and other low-calorie foods instead of calorie-dense foods such as French fries, potato and other chips, ice cream, donuts, and other sweets.
- Limit your intake of sugar-sweetened beverages such as soft drinks, sports drinks, and fruit-flavored drinks.

- When you eat away from home, be especially mindful to choose food low in calories, fat and added sugar. Avoid eating large portion sizes.

Limit how much processed meat and red meat you eat.

- Limit your intake of processed meats such as bacon, sausage, lunchmeats and hot dogs.
- Choose fish, poultry, or beans instead of red meat (beef, pork and lamb).
- If you eat red meat, choose lean cuts and smaller portions.
- Prepare meat, poultry and fish by baking, broiling or poaching rather than frying or charbroiling.

Eat at least 2-1/2 cups of vegetables and fruits each day.

- Include vegetables and fruits at every meal and snack.
- Eat a variety of vegetables and fruits each day.
- Emphasize whole fruits and vegetables; choose 100% juice if you drink vegetable or fruit juices.
- Limit your use of creamy sauces, dressings and dips with fruits and vegetables.

Choose whole grains instead of refined grain products.

- Choose whole-grain breads, pasta, and cereals (such as barley and oats) instead of breads, cereals and pasta made from refined grains. Choose brown rice instead of white rice.
- Limit your intake of refined carbohydrate foods, including pastries, candy, sugar-sweetened breakfast cereals, and other high-sugar foods.

*For more information about reducing cancer risks, visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). For more information about the healthy benefits of barley and how our favorite grain fights disease, visit [www.barleyfoods.org](http://www.barleyfoods.org) and click the Health & Nutrition tab.*