

# Lifestyle Tips For Cancer Prevention

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- Dr. Baswant Rao Malipatil -

It goes without saying that cancer is one of the most dreaded diseases. It is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and is closely correlated with lifestyle factors like tobacco consumption, harmful alcohol use, sedentary lifestyle, unhealthy diet and obesity.

Instead of just waiting and living with the fear of getting cancer, you can do a lot to protect yourself from this disease. Screening tests can help detect cancer in the earliest stages. Some cancer risk factors like genetics and environment are out of our control but lifetime risk of cancer could be prevented through changes in lifestyle. Avoiding cigarettes, limiting consumption of alcohol, reaching a healthy weight and exercising regularly are all great steps for preventing cancer. If there is a history of cancer in the family, making small changes to diet and behaviors now can make a big difference to your long-term health.

Here are some general lifestyle tips to help reduce your cancer risk.

## TIP #1: AVOID PROCESSED FOODS, OPT FOR HEALTHY GREENS

The wrong diet is linked to cancers of the lung, stomach, colon, oropharynx, oesophagus and mouth. Studies have shown that processed meats, preservative- laden foods and food items that have been injected with chemicals can increase the risk for cancer. A balanced diet with adequate fruits, nuts, legumes and vegetables will help reduce the risk for cancer.

## TIP #2: AVOID TOBACCO USAGE

Tobacco is the leading cause of lung cancer. Cigarette smoke is laden with cancer causing chemicals that damage the lungs. Many people think that by avoiding cigarettes and instead opting for hookahs, pipes, beedis or cigars they are safe but all of these are equally bad for the health and can cause cancer. Avoiding tobacco is an important part of cancer prevention. If you need help in quitting tobacco, consult doctor for stop-smoking products and other strategies for quitting.

## TIP #3: AVOID ALCOHOL CONSUMPTION

Alcohol drinking has been linked to various cancers of the digestive system including the mouth, throat,

voice box, colon, liver and rectum. Excessive alcohol consumption causes damage to the cells, and this is more prominently noticed in cases of mouth and throat cancers. Excess alcohol can also disrupt hormonal levels in the body. It is okay to have it in very small quantities but better to avoid it altogether.

#### TIP #4: MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT WITH EXERCISE

Obesity is one of the factors that increase the risk for cancer. Excessive fat in the body interferes with the healthy, regular functioning of the body. When there is excessive fat in the system, hormonal levels are imbalanced, insulin levels are affected and there is increased inflammation in the body. Regular exercise strengthens the immune and improves the body's ability to stay healthy.

#### TIP #5: RESTRICT EXPOSURE TO HARSH SUNLIGHT

Exposure to sunlight is crucial for the absorption of Vitamin D however between the time period of 10 A.M to 4 P.M, the sun's rays could do more damage than harm. During this period, the sun's UV rays are very strong which increase the risk of skin cancer. If you must go out, wear protective clothing like hats/sunglasses/full length outfits.

#### TIP #6: AVOID RISKY BEHAVIOURS

Engaging in sexual practice with unknown or risky partners increases the chance for developing sexually transmitted diseases like HIV or AIDS. This also increases the risk for cervical cancer, cancer of the genital organs, and anal cancer. Infected needles are also a source of transmission of disease - before allowing a needle to enter the body, one must ensure the needle is a fresh, unused and disinfected piece.

Simple lifestyle changes can make a difference. Consider these cancer-prevention tips. Along with this regular self-exams and screenings for various types of cancers can increase your chances of discovering cancer at an early stage, when treatment is most likely to be successful. Consult your doctor for the best cancer screening schedule for you.

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