

Your Employee Assistance Program is a support service that can help you take the first step toward change.

Simple Steps to Cut Cancer Risk

In a fast-paced world it’s often challenging to find time for healthier choices. But taking care of yourself is an investment you can’t afford to postpone, especially given estimates that 30 per cent to 35 per cent of cancers can be prevented by living a healthy lifestyle.

Reduce your risk of cancer and increase your overall well-being with the simple steps below:

Quit smoking. Butting out drastically decreases your risk of lung and other cancers, such as throat and colon cancer. It also increases your overall health and saves you from yellowed teeth and fingernails and that stale cigarette smell.

As soon as you quit, your body begins to repair the damage that’s been done. Within two to three weeks you’ll be able to breathe easier and after ten years, you’ll cut your risk of lung cancer in half.

Stay in the shade. The threat of sunburns and premature wrinkles has driven many sunbathers to seek cover. However, with UV rays stronger today than they were 20 years ago, there’s more at risk than your beauty. Skin cancer is also on the rise.

Buy sun block, reach for an umbrella and remember to cover up when you’re going outdoors. And don’t let a cloudy day fool you; snow, asphalt and water reflect the sun and can do just as much damage as days when the sun is shining brightly.

Fight cancer with food. There is no "magic bullet" when it comes to lowering cancer risk, but certain foods are known for their cancer fighting qualities. Phytochemicals, such as antioxidants, protect your body’s cells from free radicals—substances in the body that damage cells and can lead to cancer.

Foods rich in phytochemicals are usually vibrant in color, such as mangos, blueberries and carrots. Other phytochemical-rich foods include onions, garlic, bananas and pears.

Order your sandwich on rye or whole wheat bread. Whole grain and high-fiber foods are rich in nutrients, aid digestion and have also been connected to lowering cancer risk.

Get the skinny on good fats. Although fats have a bad reputation, they’re not all created equal. Certain fats have been proven to protect against heart disease and cancer. Fats found in oily fish, such as salmon, contain important omega-3 fatty acids. Olive oil is a fatty do-gooder, which not only aids in digestion, but has also been shown to reduce the risk for bowel and breast cancer amongst others.

While studies linking saturated and trans fats to cancer are inconclusive, these fats can definitely add to your waistline. And since obesity is a proven risk factor for prostate and breast cancer, it’s best to steer clear of the saturated and trans fats found in animal meat, dairy products and baked goods.

Choose water over wine. Small amounts of alcohol can be beneficial to your health, but excessive drinking can increase your risk of cancer. Drink alcohol in moderation and be generous with your water intake.

Exercise. Staying active helps you manage your weight, decrease stress levels and maintain general health. A healthy body weight and regular exercise also help reduce the risk of colon and breast cancer.

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Try to build up to 30-60 minutes of moderate exercise daily. Consider going for a post-lunch stroll, heading to the gym regularly or joining a sports league.

Though there's no way to entirely eliminate the risk of cancer, a healthy lifestyle is a step in the right direction. It may be a challenge at first, but with each good decision, making the right choices will become more of a habit. The best part? Cancer prevention is only one of the positive side effects of a healthy lifestyle. You'll look and feel better too!