

[IMAGE]

How to Prevent Cancer: Let Us Count the Ways

As scary as it sounds, some scientists estimate that up to one-third of all American women will develop some form of cancer during their lifetime. It was the second leading cause of death in American women in 2000, and the leading cause of death for American women between the ages of 40 and 79. Due in large part to the number of people stricken with cancer each year, in 1997, the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) published a series of 14 guidelines to help reduce cancer rates worldwide.

Researchers at the Mayo Clinic in Minnesota examined the effect the AICR guidelines has had on cancer prevention by first condensing the 14 recommendations into nine that were considered relevant to Western populations, then measuring those recommendations against a population of more than 29,000 women (ages 55-69) over a 12-year period. The study found that women who adopted at least six of the nine recommendations were 35 percent less likely to get cancer than women who followed zero or one recommendation, and 43 percent less likely to die from cancer. Adopting the AICR guidelines did not reduce the incidence of dying from cardiovascular disease, however.

So, how can you reduce your risk of developing cancer? Among the AICR's recommendations, people should: have a maximum BMI (body mass index) of 25 and limit adult weight gain to no more than 11 pounds; engage in daily moderate and weekly vigorous physical activity; eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables each day; eat seven or more portions of complex carbohydrates (such as grains and cereals) each day; limit intake of processed foods and refined sugars; limit alcoholic drinks to one (for women) or two (for men) daily; limit red meat intake to no more than 3 ounces daily; limit intake of fatty foods, particularly those derived from animals; limit intake of salted foods and use of salt in cooking; and eliminate tobacco use.

Reference:

Cerhan JR, Potter JD, Gilmore JME, et al. Adherence to the AICR cancer prevention recommendations and subsequent morbidity and mortality in the Iowa Women's Health Study Cohort. *Cancer Epidemiology, Biomarkers & Prevention* July 2004;13(7):1114-20.

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