

[IMAGE]

7 Simple Ways to Reduce Your Cancer Risk

By Drs. Ronald Klatz and Robert Goldman

If the ever-present threat of cancer hasn't already influenced your health behaviors, consider these sobering statistics: As of late November 2009, the National Cancer Institute's Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER) program estimated that 766,130 men and 713,220 women would be diagnosed with cancer in 2009 and that 562,340 Americans would die from the disease in 2009. Based on rates from 2004-2006, SEER also estimates that nearly one in two men and women born in 2009 will be diagnosed with cancer at some time during their lifetime. With those depressing odds in mind, there's no time like the present for you and your family to pursue natural ways to help ward off cancer. In short, you can't leave your health to a roll of the dice.

dices - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **1. Watch What You Weigh**

According to the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR), approximately 100,500 cancers that strike Americans annually are the result of excess body fat, underscoring the central role that overweight and obesity play in the development of cancer (and in the ability to survive the disease). According to the AICR, the estimated number of cancers linked to excess body fat include 49 percent of endometrial cancers (20,700 cases/year), 35 percent of esophageal cancers (5,800 cases/year), 28 percent of pancreatic cancers (11,900 cases/year), 24 percent of kidney cancers (13,900 cases/year), 21 percent of gallbladder cancers (2,000 cases/year), 17 percent of breast cancers (33,000 cases/year), and 9 percent of colorectal cancers (13,200 cases/year).

Laurence Kolonel, deputy director of the Cancer Research Center of Hawaii and an AICR expert panel member, in an article published on the AICR Web site in November 2009, emphasized this connection: "We now know that carrying excess body fat plays a central role in many of the most common cancers. And it's clearer than ever that obesity's impact is felt before, during and after cancer - it increases risk, makes treatment more difficult and shortens survival."

2. Think Natural (Not Chemical)

An October 2009 report by the American Cancer Society's Cancer and the Environment Subcommittee advises the public to minimize exposure to known carcinogens (cancer-causing substances), calling for new strategies to more effectively and efficiently screen chemicals. The subcommittee's initiative focuses on environmental hazards that have emerged as a result of the industrialization of the early 20th century, including naturally occurring substances that were first mined for industrial use, such as asbestos and uranium, to products extracted from natural sources, such as benzene from petroleum, to newly created substances such as vinyl chloride.

In *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, Elizabeth T.H. Fontham, national volunteer president of the ACS and professor and dean at Louisiana State University Health Sciences Center, explains that while "exposure levels to environmental pollution to the general public are typically far lower than the levels associated with the proven cancer risks shown in occupational or other settings ... these low-level exposures do cause us concern because of the multiplicity of substances, the fact that many exposures are out of the public's control, and the potential that even low-level exposures contribute to the cancer burden when large numbers of people are exposed."

3. High Cholesterol Is Not Your Friend

A recent large-scale study, results of which were published in November 2009, suggests that a person's risk of cancer may be significantly lower when cholesterol levels are kept low. Demetrius Albanes, from the National Cancer Institute, and colleagues studied data collected on 29,093 men enrolled in the Alpha-Tocopherol, Beta-Carotene Cancer Prevention Study, reviewing more than 18 years of data. While the researchers found that cholesterol levels below 200 milligrams per deciliter were associated with an 18 percent higher overall risk of cancer, that increased risk applied only to cases diagnosed in the early years of the study (suggesting patients may have already been in the early stages of cancer or been otherwise predisposed to develop cancer). On the other hand, higher levels of high-density lipoprotein (HDL) cholesterol (known as the "good" cholesterol because of its ability to remove cholesterol and plaque from the bloodstream) were associated with a 14 percent lower risk of all cancers over the entire study period.

woman taking temperature - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **4. Take Your Dentist's Advice**

Advanced gum disease is linked to increased head and neck cancers, according to Mine Tezal, from State University of New York, Buffalo, and his research team, who assessed the effect of advanced gum disease (chronic periodontitis) on the prevalence of head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC). The link

between gum disease and cancer was strongest among people with cancers of the mouth, followed by cancers of the oropharynx and larynx. The team commented: " This study suggests that chronic periodontitis is an independent risk factor for HNSCC. These results have implications for practical and safe strategies for prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of [head and neck cancers]."

5. Avoid Dietary No-No's

Acrylamide, a probable human carcinogen, is formed most notably when foods high in starches (potatoes, for example) are cooked at high temperatures (such as fried, roasted, baked or toasted). Increased dietary intake of acrylamide may raise the risk of endometrial cancer by 29 percent and ovarian cancer by 78 percent. Janneke Hogervorst and fellow researchers from Maastricht University (Netherlands) analyzed data from more than 62,000 women for more than 11 years, finding that when average acrylamide intake was 8.9 mcg per day, the highest intake, at 40.2 mcg per day, was associated with the greatest increases in risks of both endometrial and ovarian cancers.

In a separate study led by Henrik Frandsen, from the Technical University of Denmark, researchers found a direct association between acrylamide and an increased risk of breast cancer. The team showed that the risk of breast cancer doubles with a 10-fold increase in the levels of acrylamide in hemoglobin. The study also showed a stronger association for estrogen-receptor positive breast cancer with increased blood levels of acrylamide.

Potato Chips - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark A diet high in red meats and processed meats appears to be another dietary no-no, according to a study published in the *American Journal of Epidemiology*. The study, involving over 175,000 men, suggests that men who eat a lot of red meat and processed meats may have a higher risk of developing prostate cancer, as compared to those who limit their consumption of such foods.

Rashmi Sinha, from the National Cancer Institute, and colleagues studied 175,343 U.S. men, ages 50 to 71 years, for nine years. The team found that men who ate the most red and processed meats had an elevated risk of developing any stage of prostate cancer, but advanced cancer in particular. The researchers also speculate that grilling and barbecuing red meat may be particularly connected to prostate cancer risk, as high-heat cooking produces certain chemicals, including polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons and heterocyclic amines, that are known to cause cancer in animals.

6. Sugar and Spice Is Nice

Irish researchers have determined that curcumin, an extract found in the curry spice turmeric, promotes death of cancer cells. In a lab model of esophageal cancer, Sharon McKenna, from Cork Cancer Research Centre at the University College Cork and Mercy University Hospital (Ireland) and fellow researchers have found that curcumin, an extract found in the bright yellow curry spice turmeric, causes the cells to digest themselves. In an article in the October 2009 issue of the *British Journal of Cancer*, the team observed: "Curcumin can induce cell death by a mechanism that is not reliant on apoptosis induction, and thus represents a promising anticancer agent for prevention and treatment of oesophageal cancer."

Another study suggests that certain compounds in pomegranate, a rich source of antioxidants, inhibit a liver enzyme and thus may confer beneficial effects against prostate cancer development. In a study led by Daneel Ferreira, from the University of Mississippi, researchers performed an *in vitro* experiment that found that two antioxidants present in pomegranates, punicalagins and punicalins, have the potential to inhibit a specific enzyme known to contribute to prostate cancer.

pomegranate juice - Copyright â Stock Photo / Register Mark **7. Live the Good Life**

Duke University researchers confirm that there are indeed certain lifestyle behaviors that help prevent cancer. In a study presented at the American Association for Cancer Research's Seventh Annual International Conference in Cancer Prevention Research in 2008, Igor Akushevich and colleagues reported an association between cigarette smoking with lung cancer, and that circulatory disease and diabetes increase the risk of breast cancer while immune diseases increase the risk of prostate cancer. (All three of these conditions have been linked, at least in some cases, to poor lifestyle behaviors including poor diet, lack of exercise, etc.) The researchers also found that moderate physical activity decreased cancer risk, particularly for colon and prostate cancer, and that general optimism in life was associated with a lowered cancer risk.

What's more, Earl Ford, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and colleagues studied data from 23,153 German men and women, ages 35 to 65 years, who participated in the European Prospective Investigation Into Cancer and Nutrition-Potsdam study. The researchers found that four lifestyle factors -- never smoking, body mass index (BMI) of 30 or less, exercising 3.5 hours a week, and eating a healthy diet -- slashed the risk of cancer, as well as cardiovascular disease and diabetes, by a staggering *80 percent*.

Don't Wait Until It's Too Late

The bottom line is that a healthy lifestyle is important not only for reducing your risk of developing cancer, but also for protecting against numerous other life-robbing conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease. So, how many of the seven anti-cancer behaviors mentioned in this article are a part of your regular routine? If the answer is less than seven, you're not doing all you can to protect yourself. It may not seem all that important now, but think how you'll feel if cancer strikes you or a member of your family. Why risk having that happen? Now is the time to improve your health and help ensure a long, healthy life free of cancer and other diseases.

Ronald Klatz, MD, is the president of the American Academy of Anti-Aging (www.worldhealth.net), a nonprofit organization dedicated to the prevention, detection and treatment of aging-related disease.

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