

CANCER PREVENTION

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February is National Cancer Prevention Month and 2/4/18 is World Cancer Day.

There are many potential factors at play in the cause of cancer. Not all of these factors are well understood. However, there are definitely certain ways that are known to decrease the risk of developing cancer.

It is estimated that 1/3 of all US Cancer cases could be prevented through diet and exercise. Obesity is an independent risk factor for developing several types of cancer that can be modified with increasing physical activity and eating a healthy diet. Epidemiologic research and evidence suggests minimizing consumption of processed meats and alcohol along with increasing consumption of cruciferous vegetables, calcium with Vitamin D supplementation, and foods high in antioxidants decrease the risk of developing cancer.

One of the most important ways to prevent cancer is through genetic testing when applicable depending on family history. Being educated about family history allows for more proactive decision making to avoid or minimize the risk of developing cancer.

Additional modifiable risk factors that increase the risk of cancer include smoking cessation, use of sunscreen when exposed to sunlight, and limited exogenous hormone supplementation with estrogen and progesterone.

Unfortunately there are non-modifiable risk factors as well, such as age, underlying history of chronic inflammatory conditions such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis that increase the risk of colon cancer, infectious disease exposure during an individual's lifetime such as human papilloma virus or Epstein Barr Virus, and radiation or unknown substance exposure that can increase the risk of cancer as well.

Therefore, it is extremely important to remain up to date with all age appropriate cancer screening as recommended by your physician.

It is now definitely a myth that people can't do anything to modify their risk of getting cancer.

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