Healthy Living Newsletter

February 2014

Diet, exercise, smoking, and other lifestyle choices you make all impact your overall health and your risk for cancer. To help you stay well, the American Cancer Society offers the Healthy Living Newsletter, a monthly email with useful information on eating right, staying active, and other steps you can take to help reduce your cancer risk. | Español

Exercise Can Lower Cancer Risk

Engaging in regular exercise is good for you for many reasons, and one of them is to lower your risk of cancer. How much exercise is enough to lower your risk? FIND OUT

Patient Navigators Have Your Back

Finding your way through the health care system can seem complicated and overwhelming, especially if you have a serious condition. Learn more about how patient navigators can guide you.

Healthy Teeth, Healthy You

You brush, floss, and visit the dentist to keep that beautiful smile. But did you know good oral hygiene habits can also help fight off cancer and heart disease? How do your oral hygiene habits measure up?
Winter Fruits and Vegetables

Fruits and vegetables are freshest — and cheapest — when in season. Check out your best bets in the produce aisle this winter.

Don't hate Brussels sprouts!

Think you don't like Brussels sprouts? Try our recipe for Garlic Roasted Brussels Sprouts — it just might change your mind!
Healthy Living » How Exercise Can Lower Cancer Risk

How Exercise Can Lower Cancer Risk

Engaging in regular exercise is good for you for many reasons, and one of them is to lower your risk of getting cancer. According to the *American Cancer Society Guidelines on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention*, getting more physical activity is associated with a lower risk for several types of cancer, including breast, prostate, colon, endometrium, and possibly pancreatic cancer. Physical activity can help regulate some hormones that contribute to the development of cancer and help keep the immune system healthy.

Regular exercise also helps you stay at a healthy weight, which helps regulate hormones and helps the immune system. In fact, being overweight or obese is a factor in an estimated 14% to 20% of cancer deaths in the US. Losing even a small amount of weight has health benefits and is a good place to start.

Another advantage to exercising is that when you're exercising, you aren't just sitting. Evidence is growing that sitting time, no matter how much exercise you get when you aren't sitting, increases the likelihood of developing several types of cancer, as well as obesity, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.

**How much exercise do I need?**

Adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity each week, preferably spread throughout the week. But even lower amounts of activity can help. For people who haven't exercised in a while, it makes sense to start slowly and build up gradually. And clear any new activity with your doctor.
Kids should get at least 1 hour of moderate- or vigorous-intensity activity each day, with vigorous-intensity activity at least 3 days each week.

Examples of moderate intensity activities include brisk walking (3 mph), dancing, leisurely bicycling, yoga, golfing, softball, doubles tennis, and general yard and garden maintenance. Examples of vigorous intensity activities include jogging, running, fast bicycling, swimming, aerobic dance, soccer, singles tennis, and basketball. All of these activities are in addition to those that are part of your usual routine at home and work — things like walking from your car to the garage, and climbing a flight of stairs.

Read the entire American Cancer Society Guidelines on Nutrition and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention to learn more.
Patient Navigators: Frequently Asked Questions

You may have never heard of patient navigators, also called patient advocates. But this relatively new type of health care worker is becoming a familiar face in more hospitals and communities, helping an increasing number of patients find their way through the complex American health care system.

The first patient navigator program was launched at Harlem Hospital in 1990 by surgical oncologist Dr. Harold P. Freeman after he witnessed too many women with late stage breast cancer that he wished had been caught earlier. Freeman wanted to break down barriers to cancer screening, diagnosis, treatment, and supportive care faced by underserved populations. After his program was developed, breast cancer survival rates at Harlem Hospital increased from 39% to 70%. Today, hundreds of patient navigator programs exist all over the country, and organizations are being formed to train patient navigators, establish standards, and expand programs.

What is a patient navigator?

According to the American Medical Association, a patient navigator is someone who provides personal guidance to patients as they move through the health care system. Patient navigators may have professional medical, legal, financial, or administrative experience. Or they may have personally faced health care-related challenges and want to help others who find themselves in similar situations.

Navigators can be employed by community groups, hospitals, or insurance companies. They may be paid by those organizations, they may be volunteers, or they may be independent consultants hired by
people who want help managing their complex medical needs.

What kind of training do patient navigators have?

So far, the patient navigator profession is not regulated. While many organizations offer certificates, there are no state or national credentials or licenses. However, this may be changing. The National Association of Healthcare Advocacy Consultants (NAHAC) is in the process of developing a nationally recognized set of credentials.

Some patient navigators are nurses assigned patient navigator roles at the hospitals where they work. Others come to the profession without a medical background and are trained by organizations like the American Cancer Society in collaboration with a partner hospital in their community.

"Patient navigators remove barriers to care," said Rian Rodriguez, MPH, director of the American Cancer Society Patient Navigator Program. "They ensure that patients don't fall through the cracks so they can complete their treatment and have a more successful health outcome."

What kinds of things do patient navigators do?

Patient navigators work with patients and families to help with many different needs associated with the health care system. This may include helping with insurance problems, finding doctors, explaining treatment and care options, going with patients to visits, communicating with their health care team, assisting caregivers, and managing medical paperwork.

Not every patient navigator does all of these things, and there is no single list of services. Some navigators only work with senior citizens, others only with cancer patients, or others only to solve medical billing problems. It depends entirely on the individual's business and practice.

How do I know if I need a patient navigator?

The original goal of patient navigation was to help people overcome barriers like poverty, low literacy, or lack of health insurance that were preventing them from gaining access to medical care. However, care for illnesses like cancer can be so complicated that patients, regardless of income or education level, can benefit from navigation. In fact, under a new requirement for accreditation by the American College of Surgeons Commission on Cancer, cancer centers must provide patient-navigation services by 2015.

You may also choose to enlist the help of a patient navigator when enrolling in health insurance through the new health insurance marketplaces. The Affordable Care Act requires that each state health insurance exchange establish a navigator program to help individuals and businesses make informed decisions about enrolling in health insurance through the exchange.

How can I find a patient navigator?

The American Cancer Society program has patient navigators at 125 hospitals, treatment centers, and other health care settings throughout the country. Call us at 1-800-227-2345 anytime day or night to find out if there is an American Cancer Society Patient Navigator Program in your area.

If you plan to enroll in an insurance plan through your state's marketplace under the Affordable Care Act and you want help, find a trained counselor in your area at LocalHelp.HealthCare.gov.
For help with a specific medical condition or illness, a good place to start is with your treatment center. Many hospitals and cancer centers have patient navigator programs.

If you want to hire your own private patient navigator, try searching the directory at the National Association of Healthcare Advocacy Consultants website to find an NAHAC member in your area.

American Cancer Society Patient Navigator Program

Call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345 anytime to learn more about the patient navigator program and to find out if there is a patient navigator in your area.
Healthy Teeth, Healthy You

Most of us know that regularly brushing, flossing, and visiting the dentist will help us keep our beautiful smiles. But we may not realize that good oral hygiene habits can also help us fight off some very serious health problems, including cancer and heart disease.

A recent study suggests that gum disease and dental problems are linked to the oral form of human papillomavirus (HPV) infection, which causes some cancers of the throat. Researchers don't fully understand why this is the case, but some speculate that wounds in the mouth allow the virus to infect the body.

Most HPV infections do not cause cancer, but the number of throat cancer cases linked to HPV has risen dramatically over the past few decades. The American Dental Association (ADA) recommends regular dental check-ups that include an examination of the entire head and neck to help find signs and symptoms of cancer or pre-cancer. The ADA says you should talk to your dentist or doctor if you notice a sore throat that doesn't go away, trouble swallowing, hoarse voice, ear pain, or swollen lymph nodes.

Other research has shown a relationship between gum health and heart health. A study published in the Journal of the American Heart Association says taking care of your gums by brushing, flossing, and regular dental visits could help prevent heart disease. Researchers think bacteria in the mouth enters the bloodstream through injured gums, leading to inflammation linked to narrowing of the arteries that can cause heart attack and stroke. In the study, an improvement in dental health was linked to lower levels of bacteria in the mouth and less narrowing of the arteries.
The ADA recommends that you practice good oral hygiene by brushing your teeth twice a day with a fluoride toothpaste, cleaning between your teeth once a day with floss or another interdental cleaner, replacing your toothbrush every 3 or 4 months, eating a balanced diet, limiting between-meal snacks, and scheduling regular dental check-ups.

And we wouldn't be the American Cancer Society if we didn't remind you that smoking is another cause of bad oral health, as well as a major risk factor for both cancer and heart disease. If you use tobacco, the most dramatic way to lower your risk is to quit.

Stay Healthy All Year Long

Receive lifestyle tips each month to stay well and help lower your cancer risk.

Sign up for the Healthy Living Newsletter now »
Winter Fruits and Vegetables

It seems you can get anything you want at the grocery store these days — cranberries in the summer, watermelon in winter — as long as you're willing to pay for it. But to get plenty of produce in your diet more economically, it makes sense to buy produce that's in season. This winter, try planning your menu around some of these fresh fruits and vegetables:

• **Brussels sprouts** are a good source of dietary fiber and folate, and high in vitamin C. Choose firm, compact, bright green Brussels sprouts heads. If possible, buy them on the stalk. And try our recipe for [Garlic Roasted Brussels Sprouts](#).

• **Clementines** are loaded with Vitamin C. Choose clementines with a uniform orange color, shiny skin, and without blemishes or wrinkles. They should feel soft.

• **Collard greens** are an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, folate, calcium, and fiber. Choose bunches with dark green leaves and no yellowing.

• **Dates** are a good source of fiber, potassium, and manganese. Choose dates that are shiny, uniformly colored, and not broken.

• **Grapefruit** is high in vitamin A and vitamin C. Choose grapefruits with thin, smooth, firm, skin without blemishes. They should be heavy for their size.

• **Kale** is an excellent source of vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, and potassium. Choose dark bunches with small to medium leaves. Avoid brown or yellow leaves.

• **Kiwi** is a good source of fiber, potassium, vitamin C, and vitamin E. Choose slightly firm kiwis with a rough, fuzzy skin.
• **Pears** are an excellent source of fiber and a good source of vitamin C. Choose firm pears, and let them ripen at home by storing the pears in a paper bag at room temperature.

• **Sweet potatoes** are high in vitamin A and vitamin C and a good source of fiber and potassium. Choose firm, small- to medium-sized potatoes with smooth skin and no cracks, soft spots, or blemishes.

• **Turnips** are an excellent source of vitamin C. Choose pearly, heavy turnips without soft spots. If possible, select turnips with fresh leaves still attached. Small to medium ones are the sweetest.

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**Eat Your Vegetables (and Fruits)**

The American Cancer Society recommends eating at least 2 ½ cups of fruits and vegetables every day. Sound like a lot? **Adding more fruits and vegetables to your diet may be easier than you think.**
Don't hate Brussels sprouts!

Brussels sprouts have a bad rap. If past their prime or overcooked, they can smell bad or taste bitter. But because Brussels sprouts are a good source of dietary fiber and folate, and high in vitamin C, it's worth your while to give them another try. And this is the perfect time, because Brussels sprouts are in season. They can be steamed, grilled, sautéed, stir-fried, or roasted. They can be added to soups, casseroles, or pasta dishes.

To get the freshest Brussels sprouts, choose the brightest green ones you can find, still on the stalk if possible. They should be firm and compact. Then start your love for eating Brussels sprouts with this recipe for Garlic Roasted Brussels Sprouts from *The Great American Eat-Right Cookbook*, available from the American Cancer Society.

**Garlic Roasted Brussels Sprouts**

*Roasting at high heat transforms even sturdy, fibrous vegetables like Brussels sprouts into a tender, deeply flavorful side dish. For a splurge, sprinkle with chopped pancetta, a flavorful Italian bacon, which permeates the sprouts with a smoky, salty flavor as they roast. These spiffed-up sprouts are a good example of how a fatty meat, when used in moderation, can be an acceptable addition to a dish.*

- 1 ounce pancetta, finely chopped, or 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 pound Brussels sprouts, trimmed and halved lengthwise
- 3 garlic cloves, thinly sliced
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
Preheat the oven to 400 degrees. Lightly coat a rimmed baking sheet with nonstick cooking spray or brush lightly with oil.
Place Brussels sprouts cut side down on the baking sheet. Top with garlic slices. Sprinkle with pancetta or drizzle with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
Roast for 10 minutes, remove from the oven, and stir well to combine. Roast for 5 to 10 minutes, or until vegetables are tender and browned.
Serves 4.

Per Serving
Calories 70
Calories from fat 25
Total fat 3 g
Saturated fat 0.8 g
Trans fat 0 g
Polyunsaturated fat 0.6 g
Monounsaturated fat 1.2 g
Cholesterol 5 mg
Sodium 155 mg
Total carbohydrate 11 g
Dietary fiber 3 g
Sugars 4 g
Protein 4 g