Healthy Living

October 2015

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.  

Breast Cancer Symptoms: What You Need to Know

Find breast cancer as early as possible by staying up to date on mammograms and other screening tests your doctor recommends and paying attention to any breast changes.

Facing Cancer as a Couple

A cancer diagnosis affects friends and family as well. Get advice on how to handle the stresses of a loved one's cancer at any stage of your relationship.

4 Essential Exercises For Older Adults

Stay healthy and independent as you age with regular physical activity. Learn about the 4 types of exercise that experts recommend for older adults.

A Whole Lot About Whole Grains

Nutritionists say you should make whole grains at least half the grains you eat. We'll tell you how to read labels and make simple choices to add whole grains to your diet.
Recipe: Pineapple-Banana Milk Shake

Bananas supply essential vitamins and minerals and have been linked to heart and digestive health. Blend up our Pineapple-Banana Milk Shake for less than 200 calories per serving.
Breast Cancer Symptoms: What You Need to Know

An important way to stay healthy is to be aware of how your breasts normally look and feel. Paying attention to changes and getting them checked by a doctor can help find breast cancer as early as possible, which gives you a better chance of successful treatment.

But knowing what to look for is not an excuse to skip mammograms and other screening tests, which can help find breast cancer in its early stages, even before any symptoms appear. If you have any of these breast symptoms, get checked right away.

A lump in your breast
Most people know that a lump or mass in the breast can be a symptom of breast cancer. Such lumps are often hard and painless, though some may be painful.

Not all lumps are cancer, though. There are a number of breast conditions (like cysts) that are not cancer, but that can also cause lumps. Still, it's important to have your doctor check out any new lump or mass right away. If it does turn out to be cancer, the sooner it's diagnosed the better.

Swelling in or around your breast, collarbone, or armpit
Breast swelling can be caused by inflammatory breast cancer, a particularly aggressive form of the disease.

Swelling or lumps around your collarbone or armpits can be caused by breast cancer that has spread to lymph nodes in those areas. The swelling may occur even before you can feel a lump in your breast, so if you have this symptom, be sure to see a doctor.
Skin thickening or redness
If the skin of your breast starts to feel like an orange peel or gets red, have it checked right away. Often, these are caused by mastitis, a breast infection common among women who are breast feeding. Your doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat the infection.

If your symptoms don't improve after a week, though, get checked again, because these symptoms can also be caused by inflammatory breast cancer. This form of breast cancer can look a lot like a breast infection, and because it grows quickly it's important to diagnose it as soon as possible.

Breast warmth and itching
Like skin thickening and redness, breast warmth and itching may be symptoms of mastitis – or inflammatory breast cancer. If antibiotics don't help, see your doctor again.

Nipple changes
Breast cancer can sometimes cause changes to how your nipple looks. If your nipple turns inward, or the skin on it thickens or gets red or scaly, get checked by a doctor right away. All of these can be symptoms of breast cancer.

Nipple discharge
A discharge (other than milk) from the nipple may be alarming, but in most cases it is caused by injury, infection, or a benign tumor (not cancer). Breast cancer is a possibility, though, especially if the fluid is bloody, so your doctor needs to check it out.

Pain
Although most breast cancers do not cause pain in the breast, some do. More often, women have breast pain or discomfort that is related to their menstrual cycle. This type of pain is most common in the week or so before their periods, and often goes away once menstruation begins.

Some other benign breast conditions, such as mastitis, may cause a more sudden pain. In these cases the pain is not related to the menstrual cycle. If you have breast pain that is severe or persists and is not related to the menstrual cycle, you should be checked by your doctor. You could have cancer or a benign condition that needs to be treated.

Again, while benign breast conditions are much more common than breast cancer, it is important to let your health care team know about any changes in your breast so they can be checked out right away.

Breast Cancer Screening Guidelines
Follow American Cancer Society guidelines to find breast cancer as early as possible, when it's easier to treat.
Facing Cancer as a Couple

Whether you are just dating or you are years into a committed relationship, cancer can suddenly become part of your world. Knowing how to handle the impact of this disease can help both you and your loved one cope as you look toward the future. The advice below can help guide you as you face the stresses that come with cancer, regardless of how new or old your relationship may be.

When the relationship is new
If you're just starting a relationship with someone, cancer may seem like an intense topic to discuss. But with so many more people surviving and thriving after diagnosis, dating and cancer are not mutually exclusive.

A new partner to a person with cancer may feel overwhelmed by what cancer could mean when they're still trying to establish a relationship. The person with cancer may not be sure what to expect or what to say either. The best thing to do on both sides is to try to communicate as openly and honestly as possible. The conversations you have may not always be easy, but they are essential to moving forward in the healthiest possible way.

When it's just the two of you
In a more established relationship, it may be easier to talk about cancer, but it is still just as challenging to deal with the effects. One partner may be facing not just physical illness, but also the mental stress that comes with being diagnosed with a life-changing and even life-threatening disease. The other partner may suddenly need to offer support in ways they've never had to before, including stepping into the challenging role of cancer caregiver.
Communication is essential as you work together to tackle both the disease and the needs of daily life, but it's a good idea to also keep an eye on each other's emotional health. Depression and anxiety are common for both patients and caregivers, so watch out for signs that your loved one may need some additional support.

**When you have young children**

When children are a part of a relationship, juggling caregiving for them as well as helping them understand and process what cancer means can make for an added challenge.

Children worry about who will take care of them if something happens to you, or that somehow a loved one's cancer is their "fault." One of the best ways to help is to explain to them how their needs will be met and that cancer is nobody's fault. Let them know that no matter what, you will work to get through this together.

---

**Resources for Couples**

Buy our book *Couples Confronting Cancer* from the American Cancer Society book store.
4 Essential Exercises For Older Adults

Your later years are not the time to give up on exercise. Regular physical activity can help make everyday tasks easier and help you live independently in old age. But according to the National Institutes of Health, only about 30% of people ages 45 to 64 say they engage in regular leisure-time physical activity. The number falls to 25% for those between 65 and 74 and to just 11% for people 85 and older.

Physical activity can improve your balance, increase your strength, improve your mood, and help control conditions like diabetes, heart disease, osteoporosis, and depression. It can also lower your risk of developing some types of cancer.

Experts recommend 4 types of exercise for older adults:

1. **Endurance exercises** like brisk walking and dancing improve the health of your heart, lungs, and circulatory system. Those exercises can make it easier for you to do things like mow the lawn and climb stairs.

2. **Strength exercises** like lifting weights and using resistance bands can increase muscle strength that you need for activities such as carrying groceries or lifting grandchildren.

3. **Balance exercises** can help prevent falls – a major health risk for older adults.

4. **Stretching or flexibility exercises** can give you more freedom of movement for bending to tie your shoes or looking over your shoulder as you back out of the driveway.
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.**
A Whole Lot About Whole Grains

Whole grains. You see those mysterious words on packaging and hear health experts talk about them. You're even supposed to make whole grains at least half the grains you eat. And you may know that eating whole grains as part of a healthy diet has been linked to a lower risk of some cancers and other chronic diseases.

But what are they? And how can you tell which products really contain whole grains?

A "grain" is any food made from wheat, rice, oats, barley, or another cereal grain. Some examples are bread, breakfast cereal, oatmeal, and corn tortillas. Grains are divided into two categories: whole grains, which include the entire grain kernel, including the bran, germ, and endosperm; and refined grains, which are processed to remove the bran and germ. But it's those parts that are removed that help bring about the health benefits.

At the grocery store, read labels to make sure you buy whole-grain products. The very first ingredient on the list should be a whole grain, including "whole wheat," "oatmeal," "whole oats," "whole-grain cornmeal," or "whole rye." Don't be fooled by healthy-sounding terms like "100% wheat," "seven grain," or "bran" that often appear in the name of the product. Read the ingredients list to know for sure what is in the product.

You can also add whole grains to your diet by choosing brown rice instead of white; quinoa or bulgur instead of regular couscous. Add barley or bulgur to soups, and eat popcorn without added salt and butter for a good whole-grain snack.
Innovations in Home Cooking
Try one or two of our ideas on ways to add more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains to your day.
Go Bananas!

Bananas have lots of potassium, a mineral that many Americans get too little of. They are also a good source of vitamin C, vitamin B6, and fiber. The nutrients in bananas may help to reduce the risk of high blood pressure and stroke.

Keep fresh bananas in the house for an easy-to-grab, satisfying snack. If they get a little too ripe, use them in our low-fat Pineapple-Banana Milk Shake from the American Cancer Society’s Healthy Eating Cookbook, which you can get in the American Cancer Society bookstore.

Recipe: Pineapple-Banana Milk Shake

Ingredients:

1 cup canned crushed pineapple, packed in juice
1 medium banana, cut up
1 cup ice water
½ cup non-fat dry milk powder
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
8 ice cubes

Combine pineapple, banana, ice water, dry milk powder, lemon juice, and vanilla in a blender and process until smooth. Add ice cubes, two at a time, processing constantly until thick and smooth.
Makes 2 servings

**Per serving:**

Calories, 171  
Total fat, 0.5 g