



Women Can't Wish Away Cancer

Women can't wish away cancer; however, there are steps to take that can take to reduce their risk of cancer. An estimated 18 percent of cancer cases and 16 percent of cancer deaths are attributable to the combined effects of excess body weight, alcohol consumption, physical inactivity and eating an unhealthy diet. The Mayo Clinic, the American Cancer Society and the CDC all offer advice that may help prevent cancer in women. What follows are basic guidelines they all pretty much agree on.

Get regular medical care.

Schedule all recommended health screenings — specifically, BMI, chlamydia, cervical cancer and mammogram. Regular self-exams and screenings for various types of cancers (such as cancer of the skin, colon, cervix and breast) can increase your chances of discovering cancer early when treatment is most likely to be successful. Ask your doctor about the best cancer screening schedule for you.

Eat a healthy, balanced diet.

This can't guarantee cancer prevention, but it might reduce your risk. So, eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans. Limit processed meats. In addition, women who eat a Mediterranean diet supplemented with extra-virgin olive oil and mixed nuts might have a reduced risk of breast cancer. If you choose to drink alcohol, do so only in moderation. The risk of various types of cancer — including cancer of the breast, colon, lung, kidney and liver — all increase with the amount of alcohol you drink and the length of time you've been drinking regularly.

Don't use tobacco.

Using any type of tobacco puts you on a collision course with cancer. Smoking has been linked to various types of cancer — including cancer of the lung, mouth, throat, larynx, pancreas, bladder, cervix and kidney.

Maintain a healthy weight and be physically active.

Maintaining a healthy weight might lower the risk of various types of cancer, including cancer of the breast, lung, colon and kidney. Women who participate in any amount of physical activity gain some health benefits. Strive for 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity. In addition to helping you control your weight, physical activity on its own might lower the risk of breast cancer and colon cancer.

Protect yourself from the sun.

Skin cancer is one of the most common kinds of cancer — and one of the most preventable. Try these tips: Avoid midday sun. Stay in the shade. Wear tightly woven, loose fitting clothing that covers as much of your skin as possible. Don't skimp on sunscreen. Use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, even on cloudy days. Avoid tanning beds and sunlamps.



Get vaccinated.

Cancer prevention includes protection from certain viral infections. Talk to your doctor about vaccination against hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV). Hepatitis B can increase the risk of developing liver cancer. HPV is a sexually transmitted virus that can lead to cervical and other genital cancers, as well as squamous cell cancers of the head and neck.

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month.

It was founded by the American Cancer Society in October 1985 to promote mammography as the most effective means of fighting breast cancer. Recently, the United States Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF) published new recommendations on when women should begin mammography exams. The concern is that women have been over-diagnosed and/or over-treated. Speak with your doctor about what schedule is best for you.

The Mayo Clinic, the American Cancer Society, the CDC and the USPSTF are independent organizations that offer health information that members of BlueChoice HealthPlan may find helpful.

