

... APRIL 2009 ...

## QUICK TAKES



### THE BENEFITS OF QUITTING

There is no question that tobacco is one of the most harmful lifestyle choices you can make from a health perspective. Quitting tobacco use improves health almost immediately. If you use tobacco and have not yet decided to quit, consider the following:

- **Cancers of the mouth, throat, and esophagus** risks are halved five years after quitting.
- **Cancer of the larynx** risk is reduced after quitting.
- **Bladder cancer** risk is halved a few years after quitting.
- **Cervical cancer** risk is reduced a few years after quitting.
- **Stroke** risk is reduced to that of a person who never smoked after five to 15 years of not smoking
- **Coronary heart disease** risk is cut by half one year after quitting and is nearly the same as someone who never smoked 15 years after quitting.

*Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*

## Beating the Odds

Thinking about cancer is something most of us would rather avoid, but research tells us that paying attention to our cancer risk can yield real dividends. By understanding your risk factors and knowing how to live a healthy lifestyle, you can reduce your cancer risk factors.

### AVOID TOBACCO

Tobacco use is one of the worst choices you can make from a health perspective. Tobacco greatly increases the risk for lung and other forms of cancer. People who already use tobacco should try to quit. Former smokers have less risk of cancer than people who continue to smoke. Today there is more help than ever for those who wish to quit tobacco.

### EAT YOUR FRUITS AND VEGGIES

Many Americans get too many calories in their diet; this includes eating more meat products than we need. Even more important is what the average diet lacks: a variety of vegetables, fruits, beans and other plant-based foods. These plant-based foods give your body the nutrients it needs for good health and also an arsenal of compounds that help protect against the naturally-occurring cancer risks you face every day. In fact, evidence shows that eating more vegetables and fruits probably protect against cancer of the mouth, esophagus, stomach and other cancers.

### LIVE AN ACTIVE LIFESTYLE

Regular physical activity, in any form, is shown to lower cancer risk. Exercise helps manage weight and keeps hormones at a healthy level, reducing cancer risk. Exercise also keeps the digestive system working well, allowing waste to pass more quickly and lowering the incidence of colorectal cancer. Increase your daily activity by walking more, exercising, making household chores more active, or working in the yard or garden.

### MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT

Evidence suggests excess body fat increases the risk of developing cancer. Research shows that increased body fat raises the risk of cancer of the esophagus, pancreas, breast, endometrium, kidney, colon and rectum. The balance of calories in (through food) and calories out (through exercise) is the key to successful weight management.

### WATCH YOUR ALCOHOL INTAKE

Alcohol is linked to increased risk for several types of cancer. The more a person consumes, the higher his or her risk. If you drink, limit your servings to no more than two drinks a day for men and one drink a day for women. A serving of alcohol is considered 5 ounces of wine, 12 ounces of beer, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor.

### GET OUT OF THE SUN

Skin cancer is the most common of all cancer types. To reduce your exposure to UV rays, think of the phrase "slip, slop, slap and wrap". In other words, slip on a shirt, slop on sunscreen, slap on a hat, and wrap on sunglasses to protect the eyes and skin around them from UV light.

### GET PREVENTIVE SCREENINGS

Preventive screening examinations are tests that adults should have to help find cancer early. Screenings vary by age and gender and will differ for those at increased risk for certain cancers, so be sure and discuss options with your doctor. *Sources: American Institute for Cancer Research and American Cancer Society.*

# What You Can Do to Improve Your Diet

Scientists now estimate that if everyone ate a healthy diet, was physically active every day and maintained a healthy weight, the number of cancer cases would be reduced by about one-third. One way to improve the quality of your diet, and help manage your weight, is to rearrange your plate. A good rule of thumb is to fill your plate two-thirds (or more) with vegetables, fruits, whole grains and beans and one-third (or less) with animal foods. To do this, you might select two vegetables and a whole grain or you might include casseroles, soups, or stews made predominately from vegetables, grains and beans. Think of meat as the condiment on your dish.

**VEGETABLES AND FRUITS:** Select colorful produce. Examples include dark green vegetable such as broccoli, asparagus or spinach, rich red tomatoes or watermelon, bright orange carrots or peppers, yellow corn or squash, and purple grapes or onions. The deeper the color, the greater the amount of cancer protecting substances, called phytochemicals.

**BEANS:** Beans and legumes provide protein and cancer-fighting substances to your meals. If using canned beans, rinse them in a colander before using to eliminate some of the sodium. Add beans

and lentils to casseroles, soups or stews, or even salads.

**WHOLE GRAINS:** Whole grains include brown rice, bulgur, kasha, oatmeal, cornmeal and whole wheat. Substitute a whole grain variety of bread for sandwiches or rolls, switch from white rice to brown, or select a whole grain cereal or oatmeal for breakfast.

**MEAT:** Once you've selected your vegetable, fruit, whole grains and beans, then consider your meat. Three ounces of white poultry meat or fish is a good choice. And save processed meats, such as sausage, bacon, ham and lunch meats for special occasions, as processed meats have been linked to higher risk for colorectal cancer. Plant-based foods give your body the nutrients it needs for good health and also an arsenal of compounds that may help protect against the naturally-occurring cancer risks you face every day. In fact, evidence shows that eating more vegetables and fruits probably protect against cancer of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, stomach and other cancers. The best advice scientists offer is to eat a lot of fresh fruits and vegetables and whole grains and to cut down on high fat foods and processed meats.

*Sources: American Institute for Cancer Research.*

## Asparagus with Orange Zest

Makes: 2-3 Servings

Serve as a side dish or an elegant first course. If you can only find thick asparagus spears, peel the tough outer layer with a vegetable peeler or a paring knife.

### Ingredients

1 pound thick asparagus spears, tough stems trimmed  
1 large orange, scrubbed  
1 large shallot or small onion, sliced  
Salt to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper to taste

### Preparation

1. Choose a skillet large enough to hold the asparagus and set over high heat. Add water to fill ½ inch deep.
2. With a paring knife or vegetable peeler, remove 2 or 3 strips of orange peel and add to the skillet. Slice the orange in half and squeeze the juice into the skillet. Add the sliced shallots or onion as well.
3. When the liquid comes to a boil, add asparagus and cook until just tender, 2-3 minutes.
4. Drain and season with salt and pepper. Serve immediately.

### Nutritional info / serving

47 Calories  
0.5g Fat  
0.1g Saturated fat  
4.0g Protein  
9g Carbohydrate  
2.4g Fiber  
16 mg Sodium

