How to Lower Your Risk of Cancer

1. **Do not use tobacco.** Decades of research and hundreds of studies have confirmed the strong association between tobacco use and various kinds of cancers. Smoking, chewing, and using snuff are all culprits.

2. **Eat healthy foods.** Diets of five or more fruits and vegetables each day have been linked to a reduced risk of various cancer. But not all vegetables are created equal. Best for reducing cancer risk? Broccoli, cauliflower, kale, Brussel sprouts, and cabbage.

3. **Keep moving – 30 minutes a day for starters.** Physical activity on its own may lower your risk of cancer of the breast, colon, prostate, or uterus. Being overweight may increase your risk of cancer of the breast, colon, esophagus, kidney, stomach, or uterus.

4. **Protect yourself from the sun.** Sun exposure is by far the most common cause of skin cancer. Avoid it between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., stay in the shade, cover areas that are exposed, don't skimp on sunscreen, and never use indoor tanning beds.

5. **Get immunized.** Certain viruses are associated with specific cancers. Talk with your doctor about vaccines for Hepatitis B and HPV.

6. **Avoid risky behaviors that can lead to infections that can increase your cancer risk.** Sharing contaminated needles and engaging in unprotected sex are two such behaviors.

7. **Get screened for certain cancers.** Colonoscopies and Pap smears are such tests, and early detection is often followed by successful treatment.

February: National Cancer Prevention Month

**Prayer:** Timeless God, my time is limited. Strengthen my resolve to make wise choices so that I can experience fully this life you have given me. Amen.

Your Advocate

Meet Josie Howard-Ruben

Howard-Ruben is an oncology nurse specialist and nurse educator at Advocate Lutheran General Hospital.

Josie Howard-Ruben became an oncology nurse in order to help people in difficult times. Sometimes she helps them attain wellness. Other times, she helps someone cope with a new reality, bring order to his or her life, or get things right with family and God. Even at these saddest of moments, Howard-Ruben feels as if she is making a difference.

Regarding cancer prevention, Howard-Ruben has one bit of advice: Quit smoking. “Smoking causes more than just lung cancer. Cervical cancer has a link as do many other cancers. If everybody stopped smoking, we would revolutionize health care simply because we spend so much on all the diseases tied with it – cancer, heart problems, vascular disease, diabetes, stroke.”

Recent break-throughs make the quitting process easier: Newly approved medications. Support services. Smoking cessation specialists who develop your plan and strategies for success. Even hypnosis has been found to be helpful for some.

But Howard-Ruben is not naïve about what is needed to successfully stop smoking. “It takes the average person 8 to 10 attempts before quitting for good. So just because you haven’t been successful before doesn’t mean you can’t succeed now! “Some of the heart-wrenching things I’ve seen as an oncology nurse have put me on a mission,” admits Howard-Ruben. “I urge nurses and family members to have that heart-to-heart about smoking with their patients and loved ones. So many difficult things in life we can’t change. This we can change.”

- Advocatehealth.com
- Tobacco Quit Line: 866-QUIT YES (866-784-8937)
- www.cancer.org/docroot/PED/ped
- GildasClubChicago.org
- Breastcancerprevention.org

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