



## Take Control of Your Health and Reduce Your Cancer Risk

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India Cancer Initiative

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# Take Control of Your Health and Reduce Your Cancer Risk

There are choices you can make that will help you stay healthy and reduce your risk of getting cancer. Many of the things you can do to help prevent cancer also help fight heart disease, stroke, and diabetes. The changes you can make may be easier than you think.

## Stay away from all forms of tobacco.

There is no safe tobacco. Tobacco use increases your risk for several cancers, including lung cancer and cancer of the mouth, caused by the use of oral tobacco. Smoking tobacco increases cancer risk not only for smokers but everyone near them as well. Smoking during pregnancy can harm the health of your baby.

If you use tobacco, stop! And encourage the people around you to quit. Self-help materials, counseling, tobacco cessation medications, and nicotine replacement therapies all have been proven to help those who are trying to quit. Find help today.

## Maintain a healthy weight.

Being overweight or obese can raise your risk of many different types of cancers.

If you are overweight, get to a healthy weight and stay there. Watching your portion sizes is an important part of weight control – especially for foods high in fat and sugar. Low fat and fat free doesn't always mean low calorie, so read labels and try to substitute fruits, vegetables, and whole grains for higher-calorie foods.

## One serving is:

<b>Fruits</b>	<p>1 medium apple, banana, orange – <i>the size of a tennis ball</i></p> <p>½ cup of chopped, cooked, or canned fruit – <i>half a cricket ball</i></p> <p>½ cup of 100% fruit juice – <i>small glass</i></p> <p>¼ cup dried fruit – <i>1 ice cube</i></p>
<b>Vegetables</b>	<p>1 cup of raw, leafy vegetables – <i>4 lettuce leaves</i></p> <p>½ cup of other cooked or raw vegetables, chopped – <i>half a cricket ball</i></p> <p>½ cup of 100% vegetable juice – <i>small glass</i></p>
<b>Grains</b>	<p>1 slice of bread</p> <p>1 cup of cereal flakes or ready-to-eat cereal – <i>your fist</i></p> <p>½ cup of cooked cereal, rice, or pasta – <i>half a cricket ball</i></p>
<b>Beans and nuts</b>	<p>½ cup of cooked dry beans – <i>half a cricket ball</i></p> <p>2 tablespoons of peanut butter – <i>a table tennis ball</i></p> <p>⅓ cup nuts – <i>1 ice cube</i></p>
<b>Dairy foods and eggs</b>	<p>1 cup of nonfat milk or yogurt</p> <p>1½ ounces cheese – <i>2 grapes</i></p> <p>1 egg</p>
<b>Meats</b>	<p>2 to 3 ounces of cooked lean meat, chicken, or fish – <i>a deck of cards</i></p>



## Get moving.

### Adults

Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity, above your usual activities, on 5 or more days of the week. Forty-five to 60 minutes of intentional physical activity on 5 or more days of the week is even better.

### Children and adolescents

Engage in at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity at least 5 days of the week.

It adds up. Your daily amount of activity doesn't have to be all at one time, but it is most valuable if it's done in blocks of at least 20 minutes. You can be active by walking briskly, swimming, bicycling, doing housework, and even dancing. The more you do, the better. If you have children, be active with them. But be sure to check with your doctor before starting an exercise routine.



## Eat healthy.

Eat a variety of at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day. They contain many vitamins and minerals, as well as fiber, antioxidants, and other good-for-you substances. Because fruits and vegetables are generally low in fat and calories, they may also help you maintain a healthy weight, which helps reduce your risk of cancer.

Choose whole-grain rice (unpolished rice), bread (brown), pasta, and cereal over processed (refined) grains. Look for whole wheat, barley, millet, or oats as the first ingredient on the food label.

Limit the amount you eat of red meats, such as beef, pork, and lamb. These meats contain substances that can increase your chances of developing cancer. They also add a lot of fat and cholesterol to your diet. Instead, try skinless chicken, fish, or legumes (peas and beans) as healthier sources of protein, and lean meats (look for loin or round in the name) in smaller portions.



## **Know yourself and your risks.**

Your parents and ancestors help determine some of who you are. Your tobacco use, eating and exercise habits, and lifestyle also help define your health and your risk for some diseases, like cancer. You may be at increased risk for cancer because of the choices you make and because of your family. Know yourself and your family history, and discuss your history with your doctor.

## **Have regular check-ups.**

Many cancers can begin to grow and spread without causing any symptoms. Regular screening tests can find some cancers in their earliest stages, when treatment is most effective. Ask your doctor about the screening tests you need. Be aware of any changes in your body, do regular self-exams, and visit your doctor regularly for cancer screening tests.

## Questions you might ask

### What are 'lifestyle diseases'?

These are health problems caused by a combination of unhealthy diet, lack of exercise, and tobacco and alcohol use. Diabetes, heart disease, and some types of cancer are some of these lifestyle diseases. In fact, these diseases will be a higher problem than malaria, TB, or AIDS in India in the next few years unless we take steps now to prevent these problems.

### What can I do? I don't want to suffer from heart disease or cancer.

Make changes in your daily routine now. Remember, the word is "lifestyle." These changes should become a regular part of your life. Eat a well-balanced diet with at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables. Eat less red meat (mutton, pork, and beef), and eat foods that are cooked or grilled instead of fried. Take some time out to exercise. A moderately strenuous physical activity for 30 minutes a day for at least 5 days a week will help control your blood pressure, keep your weight in check, and help you feel fit and energetic. Try keeping your work at the workplace and don't take it home. And go to your doctor for regular check-ups.

**But I had my health check-up a couple of years ago, and it was normal.**

These checks need to be done regularly. You can develop high blood pressure and diabetes and not know it. Both of these ailments can cause serious problems like heart attack, heart failure, and kidney failure if not found early and treated. Another important step is to quit tobacco.

**I smoke only at a party, with a drink.**

Tobacco addiction often begins very early in your use of tobacco. All forms of tobacco contain nicotine, which causes addiction. Nicotine is a very powerful addiction, and the habit can be hard to quit. Stay away from all forms of tobacco, like cigarettes, beedis, gutkha, chewed tobacco, and toothpaste and paan with tobacco. The same is true for alcohol.

**But I have heard that alcohol is good for the heart.**

Alcohol in a very small amount can be good for the heart. But the problem is that many people don't drink just a small amount. And alcohol often increases your appetite, and if you are at a party, you tend to snack on fried, fatty foods that are not healthy. So, only a very small amount of alcohol is considered to be OK. If you can't hold it to a very small amount, then just don't drink.

## Warning signs

Having any of these signs below does not mean you have cancer, but you should see your doctor without delay so he or she can decide if there is anything to be concerned about.

- Change in bowel or bladder habits
- A sore that does not heal
- Unusual bleeding or discharge
- Thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere
- Indigestion or difficulty swallowing
- Obvious change in wart or mole
- Nagging cough or hoarseness



## **Steps I will take to keep myself and my family healthy:**

- Eat a well-balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Get to and stay at a health weight.
- Stay away from all forms of tobacco and tobacco products.
- Make time for physical activity.
- Don't drink alcohol.
- Get regular check-ups, and talk to your doctor about what cancer screening tests you should have.



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