

# HEALTH WATCH

*Real health information to change your life*

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## **CANCER: Part 1 – preventing cancer**

CANCER – just the word is enough to frighten us but did you know -

Cancer is thought by some scientists to be a “man-made” disease,<sup>1</sup> brought about almost entirely by environmental factors and lifestyle choices. So, by making simple lifestyle changes, we can reduce our chances of ever getting cancer! Just as important, if one has cancer, these same lifestyle choices will help increase the chances of recovery.

Cancer is the second biggest killer in the industrialized world, after heart disease. However, according to Dr Patrick Quillin, ex Director of Nutrition for the Cancer Treatment Centres of America, it is now the biggest killer in the USA, surpassing heart disease as of Jan 2005.<sup>2</sup> Approximately 40 – 45% of the industrialized world’s population can expect to get cancer in their lifetime.

So, just what is it that causes cancer? Simply put, cancer starts when a single cell mutates, due to external stimuli, and starts dividing and multiplying out of control. These external stimuli include *toxic overload, stress, poor nutrition & lack of exercise*. The amazing thing is that every one of us has cells that mutate daily, yet do not become cancerous. Why? Because in a well functioning body the immune system will eliminate those cells before they can become cancerous. So having a strong, well functioning immune system is obviously the first line of defence in preventing cancer.

For cancer to thrive in your body certain conditions, in addition to a weakened immune system, need to be present:

- cancers need an acidic environment
- cancers need an anaerobic (no oxygen) environment
- cancers need food – specifically sugar!

So let’s look at what we can do to minimize our chances of getting cancer. There are five areas we need to concentrate on:

- 1) reducing our toxic burden
- 2) reducing stress levels
- 3) improving our nutrition
- 4) controlling our weight
- 5) increasing the amount we exercise

Each of the above factors is interlinked with all of the others. For example - reducing our toxic load includes diet as well as reducing chemical input into our bodies.

### **1) Reducing our toxic burden**

Every day we’re exposed to pollution from the air we breathe, the water we drink, materials in our cars, offices and homes, chemicals and cleaning products we use and from additives and preservatives in our foods. It’s been estimated that there are ±60,000 chemicals in regular use (of which ±20,000 are known carcinogens i.e. cancer causing) and that ±1000 new ones are being introduced every year. In the U.K. it’s estimated that the average person ingests ±4,5 litres of pesticides & herbicides and ±5kg of food additives every year.<sup>3</sup>

Toxins that can lead to cancer include lead, mercury, cadmium, and other heavy metals, pesticides and herbicides, exhaust fumes, chlorine, solvents (like benzene, thinners, etc.) propellants in aerosols, plastics (they either leach into our foods or give off fumes), food preservatives and additives.

These toxins accumulate year after year in our bodies and can eventually lead to cancer. It is thus vital that we try to limit our exposure, and subsequent intake, and that we regularly detoxify our bodies.

The first step is to avoid, wherever possible, exposure to toxins. While this may seem impossible in today’s polluted world, there are many simple things we can do to minimize our exposure. Here are a few ideas:

- Don't smoke!
- Avoid foods and drinks with preservatives and additives. Processed meats, for instance, contain nitrates & nitrites that are extremely carcinogenic. Many wines contain sulphites and commercially brewed beers have many chemicals in them to speed the brewing process, add colour or stabilize the head. Become a label reader.
- Only drink filtered or distilled water and not from plastic or aluminium bottles.
- Avoid storing foods in plastics and never warm, cook or microwave food in plastic containers or covered with plastic film.
- Don't use aluminium cookware. The aluminium leaches into the food during cooking. Don't use non-stick cookware. There is increasing evidence showing that teflon and other non-stick coatings give off toxic chemicals when heated. Use stainless steel and glass instead.
- If you walk, run or cycle for exercise, don't do so on busy roads at peak hours.
- Don't use anti-perspirants, they prevent the glands under your arms from excreting toxins. Use natural deodorants instead.
- Check your cosmetics. Many lipsticks and mascaras contain lead. Some skin whitening creams contain mercury. Hair colourants may contain chemicals that are harmful. Don't assume that things are safe just because they're popular – check the ingredients before using.
- Don't use toxic cleaning products in your home. One study showed that women who stay at home and clean their own homes have a 54% higher chance of getting cancer than those women who have a job. This was caused by daily exposure to harmful chemicals in their cleaning products.<sup>4</sup> Use non-toxic, environmentally safe cleaning products.
- If possible, use natural fibres in carpets, curtains and other soft furnishings in your home. Synthetics gas off toxins for extended periods after installation.
- Avoid using pesticides, air fresheners and other sprays in your home. Not only are the ingredients sometimes harmful, but the propellants in the aerosols may be as well.
- If you're stuck in heavy traffic switch the aircon onto recycle mode.
- Always leave your car windows open if parked in a garage. The plastics in dashboards, seats and carpets gas off toxic fumes which accumulate in a car closed up overnight.
- If you're using solvents, e.g. paints, do so in a well ventilated space. If need be, use an electric fan to blow fresh air into the space where you're working. Wear a mask if spray painting. Switch to non-toxic products where possible.

The next step is to detoxify on a regular basis. Toxins accumulate in the body throughout life, so it's essential to reduce the load as much as possible. Ways of detoxifying include:

- Supplementing with antioxidants like vitamins A, C & E, carotenoids, flavonoids & selenium.
- Exercising regularly helps the body detox naturally.
- Fasting – going without solid food for a day or more, while only drinking filtered or distilled water and freshly squeezed fruit juices diluted with water.
- Taking regular saunas or steam baths.
- Undergoing a regular detox programme specifically designed to help the body rid itself of accumulated toxins.

## 2) Reducing stress levels

Whilst there is debate as to whether stress actually causes cancer, it does weaken the immune system, which increases the risk of cancer. Reducing stress is sometimes not easy, for instance if someone has lost a loved one the pain takes time to pass, but most stress is a result of our attitudes.

A positive attitude enables us to handle stress far better than we would with a negative attitude. People who have goals and dreams they are actively working towards are much less prone to stress than those who have nothing to look forward to. People who count their blessings regularly are also less affected by stress.

People who have a hobby or a sport that they are actively involved in handle stress better than those who do nothing. Regular exercise has been proven to help relieve stress.

Similarly, people who have a strong faith component in their lives handle stress better than those who don't believe in anything outside of themselves.

Getting enough sleep is vital to handling stress successfully. Studies have shown that athletes who get enough sleep, (in one study they were required to get a min of 10hrs per night) perform better than athletes who get less sleep. Sleep is our body and mind's method of repairing and renewing, insufficient sleep slows and prevents this process.

Good nutrition is also vital to handling stress effectively. Stress depletes many nutrients in the body and if these are not replaced via the diet disease may follow.

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**3) Improving our nutrition**

Ensuring that we eat a healthy diet is probably the single most important thing we can do to help prevent cancer. Unfortunately, most people never stop to think about what they put into their bodies. Consider this: anyone who owns an expensive motor vehicle would never dream of putting contaminated or inferior fuels and oils into it, yet today we happily shovel any junk into our bodies! Many literally live on "junk food", then wonder why their bodies break down.

You are what you eat! This sounds like a cliché but it's absolutely true. Your body is a miracle, entirely capable of protecting itself from all manner of challenges, provided it has the necessary "fuels & oils" (nutrients) to do so.

Today there is overwhelming scientific evidence to prove that good nutrition is vital to preventing cancer (*and all the other chronic diseases afflicting modern society*). So it makes absolute sense to do all we can to eat a healthy diet, including making sure we don't eat things that will increase our risk of cancer. As we saw above, cancers require specific conditions to thrive – an acidic, anaerobic environment and lots of sugar to feed on.

To *reduce the acidity* in the body avoid eating lots of acidic foods like white flour, white rice, sugar, red meat, dairy products, and eat more alkalizing foods like fresh fruit and vegetables. One of the best things you can do to reduce acidity is to drink a large glass of water with a tablespoon of fresh lemon juice in it first thing every morning.

To *increase the oxygen content* of the body, exercise more and supplement with vitamin E – it increases the blood's capacity to carry oxygen.

- Try to eliminate, or at least cut down, anything with sugar in it, remembering that almost all packaged foods contain sugars and/or high fructose corn syrup, which could be even worse.. Don't expect to do this all in one go, rather cut back gradually. For example, if you usually have 3 teaspoons of sugar in your coffee, start taking 2½ for a week, then 2, and so on. You'll not notice the difference and slowly your taste buds will be re-educated. Ultimately you'll be happy with no sugar.
- Cut down your consumption of alcohol, caffeine, salt, fats, margarines, polyunsaturated oils and processed dairy products. Also eliminate anything white (white sugar, flour, rice, bread, etc.), carbonated drinks (colas, etc), red meats and fried, fast, processed, smoked, pickled and pre-packaged foods.
- Increase your consumption of fruits, vegetables (preferably raw, otherwise lightly steamed), nuts, whole grains and pulses.

- Increase the amount of water you drink. You should have at least 8 glasses of good quality water every day. This will help your body to flush away toxins and pollutants instead of storing them.
- Avoid food additives such as preservatives, colourants (e.g. tartrazine) and flavourants (e.g. MSG). Become a label reader.
- Increase the amount of fibre, both soluble and insoluble, in your diet. Fibre helps to sweep the intestines and colon clean, reducing the incidence of cancers in these areas. It also helps by absorbing sugars and by assisting the good bacteria in the system to flourish.
- Supplement your diet with an organic, natural multi-mineral/vitamin, antioxidants (vitamins A, C, E, carotenoids & flavonoids) and Omega 3.

There is so much information available today regarding the importance of diet and supplementation in helping prevent cancer it would take an entire book to cover it all (see the list of recommended reading below).

Here are just a few studies confirming how nutrients influence cancer risk:

- ✓ Vitamin B may cut the risk of lung cancer by 50 percent<sup>5</sup>
- ✓ Fish oil (Omega 3) lowers risk of breast cancer by 32 percent<sup>6</sup>
- ✓ Natural flavonoids from fruits and vegetables dramatically lower cancer risk<sup>7</sup>
- ✓ Omega 3s reduce risk of colon cancer<sup>8</sup>
- ✓ Polyunsaturated fats linked to higher cancer risk<sup>9</sup>
- ✓ Soda (soft drinks) consumption linked to pancreatic cancer<sup>10</sup>
- ✓ Vitamin C prevents cancer<sup>11</sup>
- ✓ Cruciferous compounds reduce cancer rates by 90 percent<sup>12</sup>
- ✓ Full spectrum vitamin E can halt cancer cell proliferation<sup>13</sup>

#### 4) Controlling our weight

There is a direct relationship between being overweight and increased risk of cancer. Women who are overweight have an increased risk of breast, cervical, endometrial, gallbladder and kidney cancers, while overweight men increase their risk of stomach, colon and rectal cancers.<sup>14</sup> In addition, being overweight increases your risk of cardiovascular disease & diabetes.

An easy way to check whether you're overweight is by calculating your Body Mass Index (BMI), measured as your weight in kg ÷ your height in metres<sup>2</sup>. For example, if you are 1,8m tall and weigh 80kg your BMI is  $80 \div 1.8^2 = 24.7$ , you are bordering on being overweight!

- Underweight = <18.5
- Healthy weight = 18.5-24.9
- Overweight = 25-29.9
- Obesity = BMI of 30 or greater

#### 5) Exercise

As we've already seen, exercise increases the amount of oxygen in the system, making it harder for cancers to thrive and grow. The exciting fact is that one doesn't have to be a super athlete to benefit, even moderate exercise will help protect you.

In fact, Henry Scowcroft of Cancer Research UK is quoted as saying "You don't have to be an athlete to reduce your cancer risk. There's solid evidence that certain cancers -- including breast and bowel cancer -- are less common in people who do regular, moderate exercise such as brisk walking."<sup>15</sup> Dr Patrick Quillin states that "A half hour of exercise every other day cuts the risk of breast cancer by 75%"<sup>16</sup>

Exercise also improves the immune system, the lymph flow, assists in detoxification and helps weight control. It also increases the feeling of wellbeing, enabling one to cope with stress more effectively.

***Cancer is a frightening prospect but as we have shown we can do much to help prevent it. The key is accepting that we are responsible for our own health and that making smart lifestyle choices will make a major difference. We only have one life, why not make the most of it?***

## Recommended Reading

Prescription for Nutritional Healing, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Phyllis A. Balch, 2006  
Beating Cancer with Nutrition, Dr Patrick Quillin, 2005  
Beating Cancer, Dr Willem Serfontein, 2002  
Cancer & Nutrition, Dr Charles B. Simone, 1994

## References

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-1320507/Cancer-purely-man-say-scientists-finding-trace-disease-Egyptian-mummies.html>
- <sup>2</sup> P. Quillin. *Beating Cancer with Nutrition*, p 24
- <sup>3</sup> W. Serfontein *Beating Cancer* p 9
- <sup>4</sup> Nancy Sokol Green, *Poisoning our Children*, 1991
- <sup>5</sup> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/1...>
- <sup>6</sup> <http://www.webmd.com/breast-cancer/...>
- <sup>7</sup> <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/...>
- <sup>8</sup> <http://www.reuters.com/article/idUS...>
- <sup>9</sup> <http://www.sciencedaily.com/release...>
- <sup>10</sup> [www.reuters.com/article/idUSN07113352](http://www.reuters.com/article/idUSN07113352)
- <sup>11</sup> <http://lpi.oregonstate.edu/infocent...>
- <sup>12</sup> SS Ansher, *Fed of Chemistry & Toxicology*, vol 24, p 405, 1986
- <sup>13</sup> <http://www.nutraingredients-usa.com...>
- <sup>14</sup> <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/factsheet/Risk/obesity>
- <sup>15</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-11...>
- <sup>16</sup> P. Quillin. *Beating Cancer with Nutrition*, p 49

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