

Hope & Healing

Cancer Prevention In Your Family

A heart at peace gives life to the body — Proverbs 14:30

Introduction _____

Which is more important, eating a high-fiber breakfast cereal or checking for radon in your basement; losing weight or avoiding food additives; going for a cancer screening examination yearly or keeping a positive mental attitude.

During the past few years everything from chlorine in drinking water to the use of pesticides on apples has been implicated as a potential cause of cancer. Cancer strikes one in three Americans, but the front-page scares create worry for all of us. Clearly, it is difficult to get our anti-cancer priorities straight so that we have a balanced perspective.

The editors of the magazine, Men's Health, decided that the right place to get that perspective was from the doctors and scientists on the front-lines of cancer research and treatment. They authorized a survey that polled 200 experts at the 44 National Cancer Institutes — designated Cancer Centers in the U.S. These physicians and researchers treat large numbers of patients, conduct full-scale tests of new cancer treatments and have access to the most up-to-date information available anywhere.

The cancer specialists were asked to make a list of actions that would reduce the risk of cancer and to judge each by checking one of five categories: Extremely important, Very important, Not important (but may help) or Probably worthless. From their responses Men's Health printed a list of actions that you can take right now to increase the chances of preventing cancer in your family. These results were published in the December 1992 issue of Men's Health, on pages 78-79.

One extremely significant point that emerged from the survey: Half of the experts agreed that 50 to 75% of all cancers could be prevented if everybody followed the top priority changes in lifestyle and diet listed below.

Quitting Smoking _____

Avoiding smoking and chewing tobacco leads the list. Nearly all 200 experts agreed on its importance. The deaths avoided do not all come from lung cancer. Smoking also causes cancer of the mouth, voice box, esophagus, and even cancer of body parts not directly exposed to the smoke, notably the pancreas and the bladder.

Tobacco smoking as a risk of cancer has been highly publicized for the past 30 years. Now, passive smoking has been linked to both lung cancer and children's respiratory diseases, triggering a surge in smoking restrictions across America. William Shingleton, M.D., retired director of The Cancer Center at Duke University Medical School, said, "The latest information I've read says that non-smokers' cancer risk increases 50% if he or she lives with a smoker."

Cutting Down on Alcohol _____

Nearly half of the doctors rated avoiding high alcohol intake as very or extremely important. Alcohol in moderation — no more than two drinks a day — seems to be a negligible risk. Heavier drinking — more than 14 drinks a week — can cause cancers of the mouth, throat, and liver. And, heavy drinkers often smoke, making a deadly combination. One drink is 12 ounces of

beer, 5 ounces of wine or 1 ½ ounces of 80 proof spirits.

Avoiding Too Much Sun _____

About 500,000 cases of non-melanoma skin cancer are diagnosed each year and essentially all of them are related to sun exposure. Most of these are of the Basal Cell Type and are successfully treated so they don't contribute to deaths from cancer.

The Bad news: excessive sun exposure is also linked to the more deadly melanoma. That's why sun screen lotion with a SPF rating of 15 or greater used generously and often, plus hats and protective clothing are the preventive advice for those who go to the sun often, either in their work or in their play.

Getting Screened For Cancer _____

Regular cancer-screening tests and self-examinations are methods of early detection, rather than primary cancer prevention. Early detection, however, is a secondary form of prevention: That is, you are increasing your chances that the cancer will be cured at the time of its initial treatment and so you prevent its return.

Self-Screening For Men:

- **Testicular self-exam.** After a warm bath or shower, gently roll each testicle between your thumb and fingers, gently

feeling for any hard lumps or irregularities.

- **Skin self-exam.** Monthly, undress completely and stand before a full-length mirror. Do a general survey to become familiar with your moles and other skin lesions. Begin at your head and go to your feet. With a hand-held mirror, examine your back and the backs of your neck, arms and legs. Look for large, irregular moles or sores that fail to heal.

Self-Screening For Women:

- **Breast self-exam.** Breast tissue is normally a bit lumpy. Examine your breasts each month, two days after each menstrual period or if you don't have periods, on a specific day of the month, each month. Search for dominant lumps. (Place your tongue against your cheek inside your mouth and push out. Now, place your fingers on the outside of your cheek and feel the lump your tongue makes. That is what a dominant lump feels like.) Use several positions — lying down, sitting, and with your arm over the head. Press the breast tissue against the chest wall, using the finger pads of the three middle fingers. If you find a dominant lump, see your doctor immediately.

- **Skin self-exam.** Follow the procedures given for men.

The Doctor's Role in Cancer Screening _____

The doctor's part in cancer screening will be to look for cancer of the prostate, skin, mouth, thyroid gland, breasts, lymph glands, colon, cervix and ovaries. This includes ordering mammogram studies and colon examinations at appropriate ages.

Keeping Weight Down and Exercise Up _____

Being 40% above your ideal body weight is related to increased risk of colon, prostate and gallbladder cancer. Exercise is crucial in controlling weight and the experts rated it slightly less

important than maintaining normal weight.

Positive Thinking _____

Doctors are now beginning to accept the notion that mind and body interrelationships can cause changes in our immune systems. Whether these changes can prevent cancer is still speculative but many people believe so.

Diet _____

Most of the experts rated dietary changes as important, very important or extremely important. Dr. Edward Trapido of the University of Miami School of Medicine said, "Dietary factors probably account for 35% of all cancers." Recommended changes in diet include: eat more high fiber foods, eat more fruits and vegetables, eat more whole grain cereals, and eat more cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, and cabbage. And, eat less fat.

Summary _____

The bottom line is this: If you smoke, give it up. If you don't smoke stay out of the smoke put out by smokers. Don't be shy about doing your self-exams and asking your doctor to do his or her exams. Stay out of the noonday sun. Consume less alcohol and fat and more fruits, vegetables, cereals and other fiber-rich foods. Exercise regularly. And, finally, stop worrying about all that other cancer stuff you read about in the newspaper or hear on the TV.

Awaken the Miracles Within You

The Miracle of Forgiveness

Chronic resentment is a major cause of poor health. A joyous heart pushes out endorphins and other natural substances that keep the immune system operating at a high level of effectiveness. When the immune system is weakened, a cancer cell slips by or the inside of an artery develops a slight tear.

Forgiveness is actually the supreme spiritual experience. Think about it. Jesus died on the cross, yet, he forgave His murderers.

Jesus passed through the dark of night of Calvary to the glorious resurrection on Easter day.

We limit ourselves when we hold resentment for someone who offended us days, weeks, months, or years ago.

Instead, claim the miracle of forgiveness and clear your mind and make your body happy today.

The recommendations and information in this handout are appropriate in most cases. However, for specific information concerning your personal medical condition, please, consult your doctor.