

Simple Steps You Can Take to Help Prevent Cancer

Cancer affects people of all different ages and backgrounds. While you can't control certain risk factors like age, personal and family medical history, or genetics, you can still [take action to protect your health and reduce your cancer risk](#). By making healthy lifestyle choices and scheduling regular preventive screenings, you're doing what you can to stay a step ahead of cancer.

The power of preventive cancer screenings

Cancer is most treatable when it's detected early before symptoms appear. At this point, the cancer is usually still "local" and contained to one organ or part of the body.

[Preventive cancer screenings help detect cancer](#) during the local stage before it spreads to other parts of the body and becomes more difficult to treat successfully.

Recommended cancer screenings

It's important to discuss your individual cancer risk factors with your doctor to determine which preventive cancer screenings may be right for you. [Common screenings](#) include:

- **Breast cancer screening** (mammography)
- **Cervical cancer screening** (Pap tests and other gynecological exams)
- **Colorectal cancer screening** (typically colonoscopy or stool tests)
- **Prostate cancer screening** (prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test)
- **Lung cancer screening** (low-dose CT scan)

Take action to lower your cancer risk

Listed below are three actions that can help you reduce your risk of cancer. Which one (or two) could you start today?

1. **Eat healthy and move your body.** Being overweight (having a body mass index of 25 to 29) or obese (body mass index of 30 or more) [increases the risk of certain cancers](#), including uterine, breast, pancreatic, and colorectal. Living a healthy lifestyle through healthy eating and regular exercise can help lower your risk of developing cancer. Believe it or not, it can even be fun and affordable to make healthy choices by doing simple things like sticking to a grocery list or getting creative with your daily physical activity.

2. **Practice sun safety.** [Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer](#) in the U.S. [Protect your skin from the sun](#) by using a sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of at least 15, staying in the shade, and wearing clothing like a hat or long sleeves — especially if you plan to be outdoors in the middle of the day. Remember to also check your skin regularly for any changes or new moles and report them to your doctor.

3. **Stop smoking and using tobacco.** [Tobacco use is linked to more than 10 cancers](#), including lung, mouth, throat, stomach, larynx, pancreatic, and bladder cancer. On top of that, [lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death](#) for both men and women. If you already have a smoking-related illness, you'll still see health benefits from quitting, even if it takes more than one attempt.