

# 12 Ways to Lower Your Risk for Cancer

The possibility of getting cancer is affected by many things, including age, weight, where you live and your surroundings, and family history. Some things cannot be controlled. However, you can take steps to lower your risk.

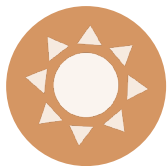
## Help Prevent Cancer



**1. Quit Smoking.** Tobacco use increases the risk for many kinds of cancer and other diseases. Quitting smoking can lower your risk for cancer within 5 years. Talk with your doctor about getting help to quit smoking.



**2. Vaccinate.** The human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine is recommended for anyone between 9 and 45 years old. It prevents multiple kinds of cancer, including cervical, anal and head and neck. The Hepatitis B vaccine helps prevent liver cancer.



**3. Protect Yourself from the Sun.** Ultraviolet radiation from the sun's rays can cause basal and squamous cell carcinomas, melanomas and other skin cancers. Use sunscreen with a SPF of 30 or higher when outside. Do not use tanning beds and lamps.



**4. Exercise.** Higher body weight and an inactive lifestyle are associated with increased cancer risk. 1 to 2 hours of moderate to hard physical activity every week can lower your risk, as can losing even a few pounds.



**5. Eat Healthy.** Studies have linked red and processed meats to colorectal cancer risk. Diets high in vegetables, fruits and whole grains (and low in red and processed meats) are linked with lower colorectal cancer risk.



**6. Moderate Alcohol Intake.** Alcohol raises risk for oral, throat, esophagus, liver, breast and colon cancers. Even 3 to 4 drinks a week increases your risk. Make informed decisions about when and how much you drink.

# Catch Cancer Early



**7. Lung Cancer.** If you smoke now or you are a former smoker over 55, talk to your doctor about lung tests every year. People who are often exposed to secondhand smoke should talk with a doctor about lung testing.



**8. Colorectal Cancer.** Yearly testing of a sample of your bowel movement or a colonoscopy every 10 years can catch colorectal cancers and pre-cancers early. Talk to your doctor about getting tested after 45 years of age.



**9. Breast Cancer.** Talk to your doctor about getting a yearly mammogram if you are a woman over 45. If you have a known *BRCA* mutation, or other factors linked to increased risk, you should start getting a yearly mammogram at age 30.



**10. Skin Cancer.** Watch for moles that do not look normal and ask for the opinion of a doctor if you see changes in the size or number of any moles you have. A visual test or biopsy from a dermatologist can help tell if it is or is not cancer.



**11. Cervical Cancer.** Every 3 years, women over 21 should have the Pap test. After age 30, women should get both the pap and HPV test every 3 to 5 years. Follow up with your doctor about any test result that is not normal.



**12. Prostate Cancer.** Risk factors for prostate cancer are different for each person based on family history and ethnicity. Men over 45 who are at higher risk should be tested. Men at average risk should talk to their doctor about whether testing is needed.

Are you and your loved ones up to date on cancer testing?  
Make an appointment by calling 1-855-702-8222.



To learn more, visit [UChicagoMedicine.org/cancer](https://UChicagoMedicine.org/cancer) and [cancer.org/healthy](https://cancer.org/healthy)