

Make cancer prevention a priority in 2019

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(HealthDay)—If one of your resolutions for 2019 is to improve your health, reducing your risk of cancer should be part of that goal, a cancer expert says.

While [cancer risk factors](#) such as [family history](#) and aging can't be controlled, [lifestyle changes](#) such as eating right, staying active and not smoking can lower your risk, said Dr. Elias Obeid. He is director of breast, ovarian and prostate cancer risk assessment at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

Cancer screening is also important because it can detect the disease at an early and more treatable stage.

"Getting regular recommended cancer screenings is just as important as modifying your lifestyle to reduce your risk," Obeid said in a Fox Chase news release. "Regular screenings can greatly increase your chances of detecting cancers early, when they're most likely to be curable and before you begin having symptoms."

Screening tests are available for breast, colon, prostate, cervical, lung and many other types of cancers. "Individuals should talk with their doctor about their specific risk factors as well as when to start and how often to receive cancer screenings," Obeid advised.

In terms of lifestyle, the World Cancer Research Fund estimated that about 20 percent of all cancers in the United States are related to excess body fat, physical inactivity, too much alcohol and poor nutrition.

"Watching how much you eat can help control your weight and keep your body mass index (BMI) at healthy levels," Obeid said. "If you're overweight, losing even a small amount of weight has benefits and serves as an excellent starting point."

Regular exercise also reduces the risk of cancer, and the American Cancer Society says adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity each week.

Smoking is a major cause of cancer, but "no matter how long you have smoked and no matter what your age, quitting can reduce your risk for cancer and other chronic diseases," Obeid said. "The best advice I can give is to quit, and if you've never smoked, don't start."

It's also important to protect yourself from the sun's ultraviolet rays, and never use tanning beds or sun lamps.

Cancer is the second most common cause of death in the United States.

More information: The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more on [cancer prevention](#).

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