Wellness and Healthy Living
Cancer: Can You Change Your Odds?

There’s no way to be certain you’ll never get cancer. But up to half of all cancers can be prevented, according to the World Health Organization. That means that a good deal of your risk may be in your hands. If you want to change the odds in your favor, start by being aware of which everyday choices can make a difference. Here are some key actions you can take to lower your risk:

- **Avoid tobacco**, and stay away from people who are smoking. If you do use tobacco, quit. This is the most important step you can take to lower your cancer risk.

- **Stay at a healthy weight.** This is the second most important step you can take. Being overweight raises the risk for many cancers.

- **Limit alcohol intake.** To help lower cancer risk, men should have no more than 2 standard drinks per day. Women should have no more than one standard drink per day. One standard drink is 12 ounces of beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof liquor.

- **Stay active.** Exercise lowers the risk for several cancers. The goal for most healthy adults is 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week, like brisk walking, or 75 minutes of vigorous activity, like running.

- **Eat healthy foods.** Base most of your intake on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, and other plant sources. Limit salt, added sugar, red meat, and processed meat like bacon, sausage, lunch meats, and franks.

- **Protect your skin from sun damage.** Avoid direct sun between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., wear sunscreen any time you are outdoors, and stay away from sun lamps and tanning beds.

- **Get cancer screening tests.** But be aware that some tests may not be helpful for you. Ask your doctor for a schedule of screening tests that are right for you.

Making healthy choices can help lower your risk for cancer. It can also help lower your risk for many other health problems. By taking steps to lower your cancer risk, you can raise your odds of living a longer, healthier life.
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Nutrition and Weight Management
Shedding Those Stubborn Pounds

You eat right and exercise, and you’ve gotten closer to your goal weight. But you just can’t seem to lose those last few pounds. This experience is quite common. The last 5 to 10 pounds often seem to be the hardest to shed.

It’s easy to feel frustrated when your weight loss stalls so close to the finish line. And you may wonder why you’ve plateaued. A few factors might be at play, such as:

- **A calorie surplus.** You may be consuming more calories than you realize, or you may be burning fewer. Or it could be a combination of the two. One pound is about 3,500 calories. To lose one pound a week, you have to take in 500 fewer calories a day, burn 500 more calories a day, or some combination of both.

- **Health reasons.** Talk with your doctor to determine whether a health condition or medicine might be affecting your weight.

- **Unrealistic goals.** A body mass index (BMI) chart can give you an idea of what a healthy weight might be, given your height and sex. Then be sure to talk with your doctor to confirm whether you’re aiming for a healthy weight.

- **Not enough muscle mass.** Muscle burns more calories than fat. Adding strength training to your workout routine may help you build more muscle. And that may help you burn more calories.

- **A high amount of muscle.** Muscle is denser and more compact than fat, so muscle takes up less space in your body. This means your weight may go up as you add muscle. But that doesn’t mean weight loss is needed.

- **Metabolism.** As you lose weight, you may burn slightly fewer calories at rest than you did when you weighed more. That’s because it takes less energy for your body to function when it’s lighter.

If you decide to try and shed those final few stubborn pounds, talk with your doctor first. He or she can rule out any health issues and help you set a healthy and realistic goal weight. Then, track how many calories you consume and burn each day. Adjust your eating plan and workout routine to create a calorie deficit. Focus on eating foods that are low in calories, but loaded with nutrients. And add strength training to your workout routine to boost muscle mass.

And remember, the number on the scale isn’t everything. If you’re eating well, working out, and managing your weight, keep up the good work. Focus on how good it feels to be making healthy choices and taking care of your body.

COACH TIP:
Do you want to lose one pound a week? Try eating 500 fewer calories each day. Or try burning 500 more calories each day with exercise. Or do a combination of the two.
Active Living
Zombies and Spartans and Mud—Oh, My!

Signing up for a 5K or 10K race can give you a motivating end-goal. But what if you long for something that goes beyond plain race bibs and water tables? You may want to try something a little splashier, wilder, or…messier.

These days, fun runs engage both body and imagination. Obstacle courses, mud runs, color runs, light runs, and adventure races are just a few themes you might try. You can be chased by zombies. You can even run races in which beer, bologna, or cake tables are more common than water tables. Some of the sportier races may call for warrior-style training (think cargo nets and spears). But others invite you to take naps on comfy couches along the course. It’s up to you to decide which race will support your fitness goals—without also wrecking them in the same day.

You can search online for “themed fun runs” in your area. Or you can look up specific themes, such as “mud runs.” You can also check with sporting goods stores and running specialty stores about races in your region. Be sure to read the race rules before you register. For example, some races have cutoff times, some require that you take a bus to the start, and some races don’t allow audio devices, pets, or strollers.

So, once you’ve targeted the kind of race that makes you want to get out there, it’s time to get ready. Whether you plan to run, jog, or walk your fun run, you’ll want to train for it. If you’re not currently active, or if you have a health condition, check with your doctor first to make sure participating in a fun run is OK for you. Then, keep these tips in mind:

- Try to train for the conditions you’ll face on race day. Train in the shoes you plan to wear, and train on the type of surface the race will cover.
- If your race features obstacles, find out how to train for them and then add that element to your training.
- If you plan to wear a costume on race day, try training in similar clothing at least once before race day. Leave nothing to chance.
- Always warm up for 5 to 10 minutes. Try brisk walking and arm swinging.
- Stay hydrated. Drink before, during, and after your workout session.
- Cool down after workouts by slowing gradually. Then, do some light stretching.
- If you experience pain or dizziness, stop. If the symptoms don’t resolve after a few minutes of rest, seek medical attention.

Invite friends and family to train with you. You may also want to look into joining a meetup group or running club. Training with people who share your goals can help you stay motivated. And slogging through a mud pit while dressed as Elvis is just more fun when you have a few Elvis-impersonating muddy-buddies by your side.
Life Skills
Kind Heart, Better Health and Well-Being?

Think of a time when you helped someone and how good it felt. Maybe you listened to a friend talk about a tough problem. Maybe you were warm and friendly to the stressed clerk at the grocery store. Or, maybe you volunteered your time to an animal shelter or children’s reading program.

It turns out that such acts of kindness (big and small) not only feel good, but may also be good for your health and well-being. Being kind to others may boost your:

• **Mental health.** Connecting with others may help you feel happier, and it might help keep your mind sharp.

• **Physical health.** Helping others may help lower blood pressure and even keep you more active.

• **Emotional health.** Kind acts may help boost your mood and give your life a greater sense of purpose.

So how can you more fully embrace a habit of kindness? For starters, stay mindful each moment for ways, big and small, that you can be kind to others. You might:

• **Be kind to strangers.** Smile at a stranger you pass on the street. Hold the door for someone. Allow a motorist into your lane during heavy traffic. Random acts of kindness can spark a pleasant moment for others, as well as for you. And these kinds of moments add up.

• **Help others.** You might help a coworker with an overdue project. You could offer to do the dishes for your overly tired spouse. Or you might work together with members of your community to provide food and clothing to families in need. The options are limitless.

• **Express good feelings.** Tell your friends and family why you care about them and why you are grateful for their presence in your life. Pay compliments as they occur to you, even to people you don’t know well.

Keep in mind that the gift is in the giving. Kindness is not about helping others in hopes of getting something in return. If you smile at someone or hold the door and they don’t show appreciation, that’s OK. Your reward was in the act itself.

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