

## *An Active, Healthier Lifestyle*

According to the National Cancer Institute, more than 60 percent of the U.S. population fails to routinely exercise. It has been proven that being overweight increases the risk of colon and postmenopausal breast cancers, and it is likely that carrying excess weight increases the risk of developing many more cancers, such as ovarian and aggressive prostate cancer. Establishing habits of healthy eating and physical activity to prevent being overweight or obese can reduce the risk of many cancers.

- Experts suggest 25 to 30 percent of several major cancers may be attributed to obesity or lack of physical activity, including colon, postmenopausal breast, endometrial, kidney, or esophageal cancer.
- Up to 18,000 breast cancer deaths per year in women age 50 and older could be avoided by maintaining a body mass index lower than 25.
- It is estimated that more than half a million people die from cancer each year in the U.S., and up to one third of these cancer cases were linked to poor nutrition, lack of exercise, and excess weight.
- Being overweight can increase the risk of cancer by causing a higher production of hormones, including insulin, which may stimulate cancer growth.
- Evidence shows that losing just 5 to 10 percent of one's body weight may result in improved health.
- For those already battling cancer, physical activity has been shown to improve quality of life. Because of the numerous health benefits of exercise—improving stamina, strengthening muscles, and increasing heart and blood vessel fitness—cancer patients should aim for a level of activity appropriate for their age and treatment plan.

A moderate level of physical activity will cause individuals to break a sweat and increase their heart rate while still being able to carry on a conversation. The American Cancer Society recommends that average, healthy adults participate in a minimum of 30-60 minutes of moderate to vigorous exercise at least five days per week to maintain health and reduce the risk of disease, including cancer. The periods of daily exercise may be broken up into 10-minute increments throughout the day, allowing for convenient and varied physical activities.

### **Examples of moderate exercise include:**

- Biking on level ground
- Dancing
- Gardening
- Horseback riding
- Golf
- Mowing the lawn
- Walking
- Yoga

### **For vigorous exercise, individuals may do the following:**

- Aerobics
- Racquetball
- Basketball
- Jogging
- Jumping rope
- Running
- Martial arts
- Swimming

Those who have a relatively inactive lifestyle should increase activity levels slowly and should feel comfortable with a lower rate of physical activity before escalating a physical fitness routine. In cases where weight loss may be required, a longer period of exercise is needed in conjunction with a low-calorie diet to reduce cancer risk. Even small changes that increase one's level of daily physical activity may reap health benefits.

### **Employ simple, creative strategies to increase activity levels:**

- Walk or ride a bike instead of taking a bus or car.
- Walk to talk to people in the office instead of e-mailing them.
- Head to the gym for a 30-minute workout over lunch.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Wear a pedometer and deliberately increase steps throughout the day.
- Plan physical activities on family vacations.
- Walk on a treadmill or ride a stationary bicycle while watching television.

*Sources: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*



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