

Five holiday resolutions for cancer prevention strategies

December 16 2010

The holiday season is an ideal time to resolve to live a healthier lifestyle, including adopting habits that may help prevent cancer, according to researchers at Vanderbilt-Ingram Cancer Center (VICC).

Instead of indiscriminately stuffing yourself with everything on the holiday table and then snoozing on the couch, there are healthier choices for a happy [holiday season](#). Here are five suggestions that may improve your family's health and reduce the likelihood of a [cancer](#) diagnosis in the future.

1 – Resolve to stop smoking.

“One of the best gifts people can give themselves and their family is to stop smoking,” said David Carbone, M.D., Ph.D., Harold L. Moses Professor of Cancer Research at VICC. “Lung cancer kills more people than breast, colon and prostate cancers combined and tobacco use is the No. 1 cause of this form of cancer. This is a particularly important gift to your children, as ‘secondhand’ smoke is also a strong risk factor, and children of parents who smoke are more likely to start smoking themselves.”

2 – Watch your weight.

While it is tempting to ignore the scales during the holidays, it can be difficult to take off those extra pounds later and being overweight can put you at risk for cancer. According to the American Cancer Society,

excess weight causes the body to produce and circulate more of the hormones estrogen and insulin, which can stimulate cancer growth. Obesity has been linked to several forms of disease, including breast, colon and pancreatic cancer.

3 – Add some cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, Brussels sprouts or cabbage to your holiday menu.

Researchers with VICC and the Shanghai Cancer Institute in China have documented a possible link between a diet rich in cruciferous vegetables and a decreased risk for breast cancer and colorectal cancer.

“Cruciferous vegetables contain some compounds that may have a cancer-inhibitory effect,” explained Jay Fowke, Ph.D., assistant professor of Medicine. “We were able to identify a group of women with a specific genetic profile who seem to particularly benefit from a high intake of these vegetables.”

Research by Gong Yang, M.D., MPH, research assistant professor of Medicine, found a similar protective effect against colorectal cancer among Chinese women who ate the most cruciferous vegetables.

4 – Substitute fruit juice, sparkling cider or water for alcohol.

“High consumption of alcohol over several years has been linked to a risk for head and neck cancer which is the fifth most common cancer in the U.S.,” said Wendell (Dell) Yarbrough, M.D., associate professor of Otolaryngology and Cancer Biology. “We encourage everyone to abstain from alcohol or drink in moderation to reduce their risk for this type of cancer.”

5 – Get some exercise.

After a big holiday meal, encourage family members to take a walk or engage in one of the new video games that require physical activity. Exercise has been linked to a reduced risk for several types of cancer. Physical activity may reduce your cancer risk by helping maintain your weight, and can also improve your hormone levels and the way your immune system works.

While adopting a [healthy lifestyle](#) won't guarantee a cancer-free life, adopting these resolutions may improve your overall health and enable you to enjoy more holiday seasons with your family.

Provided by Vanderbilt Medical Center

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