Consumer health: Reduce your risk of the 4 most common cancers

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February is National Cancer Prevention Month, which makes this a good time to learn what you can do to reduce your risk of the top four most common cancers diagnosed in the U.S.

One in 2 men and 1 in 3 women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, according to the American Cancer Society. The most common types of cancer diagnosed in the U.S. are [skin cancer](link), [breast cancer](link), [prostate cancer](link) and [lung cancer](link), according to the National Cancer Institute.

Here's what you can do to reduce your risk of each.

Skin cancer

Skin cancer develops primarily on areas of sun-exposed skin, including the scalp, face, lips, ears, neck, chest, arms, hands and legs. But skin cancer also can form on areas that rarely see the light of day, including your palms and the soles of your feet, beneath your fingernails or toenails, and your genital area.

You can reduce your risk of skin cancer by limiting or avoiding exposure to ultraviolet, or UV, radiation. Avoid the sun during the middle of the day. Wear sunscreen and protective clothing year-round. Avoid tanning beds. Also, be aware of sun-sensitizing medications, and check your skin regularly and report changes to your health care team.

Breast cancer

Researchers have identified hormonal, lifestyle and [environmental factors](link) that may increase your risk of breast cancer. And an estimated 5% to 10% of breast cancers are linked to gene mutations passed through generations of a family. It's not clear why some people who have no [risk factors](link) develop cancer while other people with risk factors do not. It's likely that breast cancer is caused by a complex interaction of your genetic makeup and your environment.

Some risk factors, such as [family history](#), can't be changed. However, you can make lifestyle changes, including limiting alcohol, eating a [healthy diet](#), maintaining a healthy weight and being physically active, to lower your risk. And being vigilant about breast cancer detection, including regular mammograms and other screenings, can help detect breast cancer early when it's most easily treated.

Prostate cancer

Your risk of prostate cancer increases as you age. Other risk factors include obesity and a family history of prostate cancer, breast cancer or the genes that increase the risk of breast cancer (BRCA1 or BRCA2). African American men are at greater risk of prostate cancer than men of other races, and their prostate cancer is more likely to be aggressive or advanced.

If you're concerned about your risk, you may be interested in prostate cancer prevention. While there's no proven prevention strategy, you can reduce your risk of prostate cancer by making healthy choices regarding your diet, weight and exercise.

Lung cancer

Although the disease can occur in people who have never smoked, people who smoke or have smoked have the greatest risk of lung cancer. The risk of lung cancer increases with the length of time and number of cigarettes you've smoked. If you quit smoking, even after smoking for many years, you can significantly reduce your chances of developing lung cancer.

Lung cancer screening is a process that's used to detect the presence of lung cancer in otherwise healthy people with a high risk of lung cancer.

Lung cancer screening is recommended for <u>older adults</u> who are longtime smokers and who don't have any signs or symptoms of lung <u>cancer</u>.

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