

Esophageal cancer: Know the signs and reduce your risk

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April is Esophageal Cancer Awareness Month, which makes this good time to learn the signs of esophageal cancer and what you can do to reduce your risk.

Approximately 21,560 new cases of [esophageal cancer](#) — 17,030 in men and 4,530 in [women](#) — will be diagnosed in the U.S. this year, and 16,120 people — 12,920 men and 3,200 women — will die from the disease, according to the American Cancer Society.

Esophageal cancer usually begins in the cells that line the inside of the esophagus — a long, hollow tube that runs from your throat to your stomach. Your esophagus helps move the food you swallow from the back of your throat to your stomach to be digested. Esophageal cancer is more common among men than women, and it can occur anywhere along the esophagus.

Signs and symptoms

Signs and symptoms of esophageal cancer include:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Weight loss without trying
- Chest pain, pressure or burning
- Worsening indigestion or heartburn
- Coughing or hoarseness

Reducing your risk

Here are four [steps](#) you can take to reduce your risk of esophageal cancer:

- Quit smoking. If you smoke, talk to your [health care](#) professional about strategies for quitting. If you don't use tobacco, don't start.
- Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all. If you choose to drink

alcohol, do so in moderation. For [healthy adults](#), that means up to one drink a day for women and up to two drinks a day for men.

- Eat more fruits and vegetables. Add a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables to your diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight. If you are overweight or obese, talk to your health care professional about strategies to help you lose weight. Aim for a slow and steady weight loss of 1 or 2 pounds per week.

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