



Ring in a New Healthier You in 2012

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Dana-Farber experts offer free and easy tips to stay healthy and reduce cancer risks

Newswise — BOSTON— With the start of a new year, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute experts are encouraging people to ring in new healthy habits and offer a number of free and low-cost strategies to help people maintain good health and possibly reduce various cancer risks.

Get moving!

Staying fit and healthy can be as simple as lacing up a pair of sneakers and going for a walk.

Moderate to intensive aerobic exercise, according to studies, can reduce the risk of recurrence of several cancers, including colon and breast.

“You don’t have to be a marathon runner, but the more you exercise, typically the greater the beneficial effect,” says Jeffrey Meyerhardt, MD, MPH, a Dana-Farber gastrointestinal cancer specialist.

Here are some inexpensive ways to workout, but consult a doctor first.

- Using the stairs rather than an elevator.
- Walking or riding a bike rather than driving.
- Taking an exercise break or quick walk at work.
- Using a stationary bicycle or treadmill while watching TV.

Color Your World...and your shirt?

It doesn’t cost anything to walk by the cookie aisle and into a store’s produce section. And, taking that little detour can provide many health benefits. A diet low in processed sugars, red meat and calories, but high in fruits and vegetables and loaded with antioxidants is one of the simplest ways to help maintain a healthy weight and reduce the risk of certain cancer.

The overall key is to look for colorful produce like pomegranates, tomatoes, eggplant, grapes, cherries, and turnip. The brighter and richer the pigment, the higher the level of nutrients.

“In the nutrition world, we like to say if it comes from the ground and it stains your shirt, you want to be eating it,” says Stephanie Meyers, MS, RD/LDN, a nutritionist at Dana-Farber.

Skip that cocktail

Limiting alcohol consumption can save money and it may lower the risk of developing some cancers. Dana-Farber researchers found that women who consume one alcoholic drink a day may increase their risk for breast cancer. “Women need to consider the possible effects of alcohol on breast cancer risk when weighing the risks and benefits of alcohol consumption,” says Wendy Chen, MD, PhD, a breast cancer expert. “Our findings indicate that in some women, even modest levels of alcohol consumption may elevate their risk of breast cancer.”

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Description

With the start of a new year, Dana-Farber Cancer Institute experts are encouraging people to ring in new healthy habits and offer a number of free and low-cost strategies to help people maintain good health and possibly reduce various cancer risks.

Save money and lives – quit smoking

Buying cigarettes and other tobacco products can really take a bite out of a budget. Kicking the habit can result in both a healthier lifestyle and significant financial savings.

According to the American Cancer Society, smoking is the most preventable cause of death in the United States. It also causes more than 80 percent of all cases of lung cancer and increases the risk of oral, throat, pancreatic, uterine, bladder, and kidney cancers.

“Even though there have been many recent advances in lung cancer treatments, the most effective way to eradicate lung cancer is to prevent it from ever happening,” explains Bruce Johnson, MD, director of Dana-Farber’s Lowe Center for Thoracic Oncology. Johnson emphasizes that it is never too late to quit.

People who stop and remain nonsmokers for at least 10 to 20 years can cut their risk of developing lung cancer in half.

- Plan the quit day
- Follow the four D’s: Deep breaths, Drink lots of water, Do something to avoid focusing on cravings, Delay reaching for a cigarette – the urge will pass.
- Avoid triggers: Get rid of cigarettes, lighters, matches, and ashtrays.

Sunscreen ‘applies’ year round

Sunscreen shouldn’t be packed away after summer ends. Skin can be exposed to harmful rays all year long. Snow, ice and water can all reflect the ultraviolet (UV) radiation that causes sunburn, which, in turn increases the risk of developing skin cancer. Some experts say winter sports enthusiasts can face just as much risk of getting sunburn as summer sunbathers. Dana-Farber experts remind to protect year round.

- Wear sunscreen, lip balm and makeup with an SPF of 15 or higher.
- Use UV-blocking eye protection, especially for skiing.
- In a tropical setting, wear a broad brimmed hat and UV-blocking sunglasses.
- Avoid excessive exposure to the sun, especially between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. when the sun is at its strongest.

Don’t forget your dentist

Visiting the dentist is not just about clean and healthy teeth. Dentists also are on the front lines of detecting cancer in the mouth. Research shows more than half of all smokeless tobacco users have non-cancerous or pre-cancerous lesions in their mouth. In addition to the increased risk of cancer, smoking and chewing tobacco erodes teeth and gums. “The treatment for this type of head and neck cancer can be a radical and deforming surgery,” warns Robert Haddad, MD, disease center leader of the head and neck oncology program at Dana-Farber. He stresses, “The changes in the cells never go away once they happen. So don’t start using tobacco and if you have, get help to stop.”

Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (www.dana-farber.org) is a principal teaching affiliate of the Harvard Medical School and is among the leading cancer research and care centers in the United States. It is a founding member of the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center (DF/HCC), designated a comprehensive cancer center by the National Cancer Institute. It provides adult cancer care with Brigham and Women’s Hospital as Dana-Farber/Brigham and Women’s Cancer Center and it provides pediatric care with Children’s Hospital Boston as Dana-Farber/Children’s Hospital Cancer Center. Dana-Farber is the top ranked cancer center in New England, according to U.S. News & World Report, and one of the largest recipients among independent hospitals of National Cancer Institute and National Institutes of Health grant funding. Follow Dana-Farber on Twitter: @danafarber or Facebook: [facebook.com/danafarbercancerinstitute](https://www.facebook.com/danafarbercancerinstitute).