



## CANCER PREVENTION

# Live the good life

**W**hen it comes to protecting yourself against colorectal cancer, there's no substitute for regular screening. But there are additional steps you can take to help reduce your risk.

The National Cancer Institute, the American Cancer Society (ACS), and other health experts recommend the following healthy habits:

**Get physical.** Sedentary living, especially combined with a high-fat diet, may increase colorectal cancer risk. The ACS recommends at least 30 minutes of physical activity on all or most days of the week.

**Avoid smoking.** If you smoke, you may increase your risk for colorectal polyps, which can lead to cancer.

**Know the risks of alcohol.** Drinking alcohol may also increase your chances of having colorectal cancer.

**Control your weight.** Obesity is linked to an increased risk of developing colorectal cancer. If you're overweight, your doctor can help you

make a plan to shed those pounds.

**Improve your diet.** We don't yet know all there is to know about the role of diet in colorectal cancer—the evidence is often mixed. But some research suggests that your risk may be higher if you eat a diet high in fat (especially animal fat) and low in calcium, folate, and fiber, or one that's very low in fruits and vegetables.

It's a good idea to go for plenty of fruits, veggies, and whole grains and limit foods high in fat, suggests the ACS.

**Can supplements help?** Some research suggests that certain vitamins and minerals—including vitamin D, calcium, and folate—may help protect against colorectal cancer.

However, experts note that there's no proof that supplements ward off cancer. So while there's no harm in taking supplements, it's best to eat vitamin- and mineral-rich foods instead.

**Key lifestyle changes can help prevent colorectal cancer.**

## CANCER MYTHS

## Learning the truth

Scientists still have a lot to learn about cancer. But they know enough to debunk a few common myths about the disease.

A few examples:

**1. Saccharin and aspartame cause cancer.** False. Research shows no link between these government-regulated sweeteners and cancer.

**2. Drinking fluoridated water causes cancer.** Not so. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reviewed extensive research and found no credible evidence to support this.

**3. Underarm antiperspirants are linked to breast cancer.** Wrong. Neither the National Cancer Institute nor the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has found any connection.

**4. Cell phone use triggers cancer.** Not true. Cell phones do emit radiation, but not the kind that causes cancer. Studies so far say cell phone use is unrelated to cancer.

Knowing these facts about cancer can help you make smart lifestyle and health care choices.



To learn more, visit the New Mexico Department of Health Cancer Prevention and Control Section website at [cancernm.org](http://cancernm.org).