

# The Healthcare Consortium

**For Your Health**

## **“National Cancer Prevention Month: What You Can Do Today to Prevent Cancer”**

February is National Cancer Prevention Month and a great reminder that everyday choices can lower our risk of cancer.

Cancer remains a leading cause of death in the United States, second only to heart disease. The most common cancers in the United States include breast, prostate, lung and bronchus, colorectal, melanoma of the skin, bladder, kidney, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, endometrial, and pancreatic cancers. These top ten cancer types account for more than 1.5 million new cases each year and more than 380,000 deaths, with lung cancer as the leading cause of cancer-related deaths, followed by colorectal, pancreatic, breast, and prostate cancers.

Despite these sobering statistics, there is good reason to feel encouraged. That’s because the American Cancer Society reports that about 40% of cancer cases in the United States are preventable. They also estimate that 44% of cancer deaths are linked to behaviors people can change. According to the Cancer Research Institute, the following small daily choices can make a big difference in lowering cancer risk:

- Stop smoking and avoid secondhand smoke. Cigarette smoking is the number one preventable risk factor for cancer. It is linked to 20% of all cancer cases and 30% of all cancer deaths. Lung cancer is the most common smoking-related cancer and causes nine out of ten smoking-related cancer deaths. Smoking also increases the risk of many other cancers, including cancers of the esophagus, pancreas, liver, kidney, bladder, and breast.
- Decrease alcohol intake. Alcohol contributes to about 5.4% of cancer cases. Even low levels of alcohol use can increase risk. Alcohol has been linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, esophagus, liver, colorectal area, and breast.
- Maintain a healthy weight and stay active. Excess body weight is the second leading preventable cause of cancer and is linked to 7.6% of cancer cases. Physical inactivity accounts for another 3.1%. Being overweight and not getting enough exercise can increase the risk of stomach, endometrial, esophageal, kidney, and other cancers.
- Eat a healthy diet. Not eating enough fruits and vegetables, low fiber and calcium intake, and high consumption of processed foods and red meat are associated with cancers of the oral cavity, pharynx, esophagus, and colorectum. Choosing balanced meals with whole foods supports overall health.
- Protect your skin from the sun. Ultraviolet (UV) exposure is a major risk factor for skin cancer and accounts for 4.6% of preventable cancer cases. Use sunscreen, wear protective clothing, seek shade, and avoid tanning beds to reduce risk.

- Stay up to date on recommended vaccines. Certain viruses can cause cancer. Human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause cervical and other cancers, and hepatitis B can cause liver cancer. Vaccines against HPV and hepatitis B are safe and highly effective at preventing these cancers from developing.

You cannot control every risk factor for cancer, but you can take steps to lower your risk. This National Cancer Prevention Month, consider making one positive change. Small actions today can help protect your health for years to come.

\*\*\*

*The Healthcare Consortium is a non-profit organization with a mission of improving access to healthcare and supporting the health and well-being of the residents in our rural community. The agency is located at 325 Columbia St. in Hudson. For more information: visit [www.columbiahealthnet.org](http://www.columbiahealthnet.org) or call 518-822-8820.*