

Preventing Cancer: Nine Practical Tips for Consumers

Four of every 10 Americans will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetimes, and two of every 10 will die of it. But there are some things you can do to reduce the risk. First, talk to your doctor about lifestyle changes that are known to make a difference – stopping smoking, reducing drinking, losing weight, exercising and eating right.

But according to a new report from the President's Cancer Panel, environmental toxins also play a significant and under-recognized role in cancer, causing "grievous harm" to untold numbers of people. Environmental Working Group's own research has found that children are born "pre-polluted" with up to 200 industrial chemicals, pesticides and contaminants that have been found to cause cancer in lab studies or in people.

Here are some simple things you can do to reduce your exposures:

Filter your tap water.

Common carcinogens in tap water include arsenic, chromium, and chemical byproducts that form when water is disinfected. A simple carbon filter or pitcher can help reduce the levels of some of these contaminants. If your water is polluted with arsenic or chromium, a reverse osmosis filter will help. Learn about your tap water and home water filters at EWG's National Tap Water Database. <http://www.ewg.org/tap-water>



Seal outdoor wooden decks and play sets.

Those built before 2005 are likely coated with an arsenic pesticide that can stick to hands and clothing. Learn more at <http://www.ewg.org/reports/allhandsondeck>

Cut down on stain- and grease-proofing chemicals.

"Fluorochemicals" related to Teflon and Scotchgard are used in stain repellents on carpets and couches and in greaseproof coatings for packaged and fast foods. Some of these chemicals cause cancer in lab studies. To avoid them, skip greasy packaged foods and say no to optional stain treatments in the home. Download EWG's Guide to PFCs here: <http://www.ewg.org/Health-Tips>



Stay safe in the sun.

More than one million cases of skin cancer are diagnosed in the United States each year. To protect your skin from the sun's cancer-causing ultraviolet (UV) radiation, seek shade, wear protective clothing and use a safe and effective sunscreen from EWG's sunscreen database. <http://www.ewg.org/2010sunscreen>

Cut down on fatty meat and high-fat dairy products.

Long-lasting cancer-causing pollutants like dioxins and PCBs accumulate in the food chain and concentrate in animal fat.

Eat EWG's Clean 15.

Many pesticides have been linked to cancer. Eating from EWG's Clean 15 list of the least contaminated fruits and vegetables will help cut your pesticide exposures. (And for EWG's Dirty Dozen, buy organic.) Learn more at EWG's Shopper's Guide to Pesticides. <http://www.foodnews.org>

Cut your exposures to BPA.

Bisphenol-A (BPA) is a synthetic estrogen found in some hard plastic water bottles, canned infant formula, and canned foods. It may increase the risk of reproductive system cancers. To avoid it, eat fewer canned foods, breast feed your baby or use powdered formula, and choose water bottles free of BPA. More at <http://www.ewg.org/bpa/tipstoavoidbpa>

Avoid carcinogens in cosmetics.

Use EWG's Skin Deep cosmetic database (www.cosmeticdatabase.com) to find products free of chemicals known or suspected to cause cancer. When you're shopping, don't buy products that list ingredients with "PEG" or "-eth" in their name.

Read the warnings.

Some products list warnings of cancer risks – read the label before you buy. Californians will see a "Proposition 65" warning label on products that contain chemicals the state has identified as cancer-causing.

