

Physical activity

The first part of healthy living involves the energy that you release from your body. Physical activity not only burns energy (calories), but can also help lower the risk of some types of cancer. Here is all it takes to get started:

- If you have been inactive for a long time, are overweight, have a high risk of heart disease or some other chronic health problem, see your doctor before starting an exercise program.
- Build physical activity into your daily routine. All you need is moderate (where you break a sweat) activity — like brisk walking for 30 minutes a day.
- Do whatever physical activity you enjoy most and gets you moving.
- After exercising, think about how good you feel about yourself and about your body. Use that feeling to motivate you the next time out.

If you are already physically active, keep up the good work. Physical activity may help lower your risk of breast cancer. This is because exercise lowers estrogen levels, fights obesity, lowers insulin levels and boosts the function of immune system cells that attack tumors.

Weight control

- Gaining weight after menopause increases a woman's risk for breast cancer.
- Weight gain of 20 or more pounds after the age of 18 may increase your risk of breast cancer.
- If you have gained weight, weight loss may lower your risk of breast cancer.



Leading a healthy lifestyle will not eliminate your risk of serious health problems like cancer, but it may lower your risk.

Nutrition

The second part of healthy living involves what you put into your body.

- Eat fruits and vegetables. Strive to eat at least five servings per day.
- Eat whole-grains and cereals. Whenever possible, choose whole-grain breads and cereals.
- Eat fewer high fat foods and sweets.
- Take a daily multivitamin with folate.
- Get plenty of calcium. Your body needs at least 1000 mg each day. You can get it from low-fat milk or yogurt, fortified fruit juices, spinach, kale or calcium tablets.

Alcohol — or the lack of it

The third part of healthy living is limiting alcohol intake. You may have heard about research studies which showed that drinking one serving of alcohol (for example, a glass of wine) each day improves your health by reducing your risk of heart attack. That is true, but many studies have also shown that high levels of alcohol intake increase the risk of breast cancer. The key is moderation — less than one drink a day. In general, the more alcohol you consume, the higher your risk of developing breast cancer.



Healthy living is not just about keeping your body free of disease.

Emotional health

Keeping your body free from disease is a big part of healthy living, but it is also important to keep a healthy attitude. Here are some ways to help maintain your emotional health:

- Do things that make you happy and that bring balance to your life. Pay attention to yourself and your needs. Go to the library and pick out a novel. Take a walk in the park. Have coffee with a friend.
- Have faith in yourself. Many things can help you be healthier and feel better about yourself. Learning to get in touch with the spiritual part of you through meditation or prayer can help you gain inner peace — in spite of what is going on in your life.

Let there be no smoke

If you don't smoke cigarettes, don't start. You have done your body a world of good by avoiding tobacco. If you do smoke, please ask your doctor for help in quitting. Smoking has been linked to higher risks of many types of cancer. There are health benefits from quitting at any age. And after five years of being smoke-free, the risk of developing diseases as a result of having smoked goes down.

Breast self-awareness

Last but certainly not least, for a healthy life, remember your breast health care, too.

1. Know your risk
2. Get screened
3. Know what is normal for you
4. Make healthy lifestyle choices

Related fact sheets in this series:

- Breast Cancer Risk Factors
- Mammography