

WEEKLY SAFETY TIP - 7/12/10 – HOW TO PREVENT CANCER

Cancer. Just the sound of the word is ominous, and a bit frightening for most of us. But the first sentence on a webpage from the Centers for Disease Control can bring some hope. It says “The number of new cancer cases can be reduced, and many cancer deaths can be prevented.” Cancer can be prevented. (Here’s the link to the Prevent Cancer page of the CDC: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dcpc/prevention/>)

You may be aware that there are some risk factors for cancer, some things that you can control to prevent or at least reduce your chance of getting cancer. Here’s a short list of things you can do:

1. Maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight increases the likelihood of many serious conditions, including heart disease, diabetes and cancer. The CDC defines overweight as a body mass index (BMI) of 25 to 29. (Calculate your BMI here: <http://www.cdc.gov/healthyweight/assessing/bmi/>)
2. Avoid tobacco. Men who smoke are 23 times more likely to get lung cancer. Women who smoke are 13 times more likely to develop lung cancer. And smokers also are more likely to develop other serious heart and lung diseases. If you or someone you know smokes, please visit smokefree.gov for guidance to quit smoking.
3. Limit alcohol intake. Drinking alcohol daily increases the potential for mouth, throat and voice box cancers. Studies indicate that drinking is a primary factor in liver cancer, and a risk factor for breast cancer and colon cancer. For more information about alcohol and health, visit the National Institutes of Health’s Rethinking Drinking site: <http://rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/>
4. Protect your skin from the sun. If you work outdoors, you are unable to limit your time in the sun. But you can use sunscreen, and when possible, wear protective clothing, a hat and sunglasses. For more information, look at the CDC’s page on Skin Cancer Prevention: http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/skin/basic_info/prevention.htm
5. Vaccinations. Hepatitis B is a virus that can cause liver disease, which can lead to cancer. There is a vaccination that can help to prevent this virus. Cervical cancer can be prevented by the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine.
6. Cancer Screening Tests. Getting regular screening tests (such as a woman’s mammogram) can help by detecting cancers in the early and most easily treatable stages.

It is easier to maintain your health than it is to return to a healthy condition after a serious illness. Do what you can now to stay healthy.