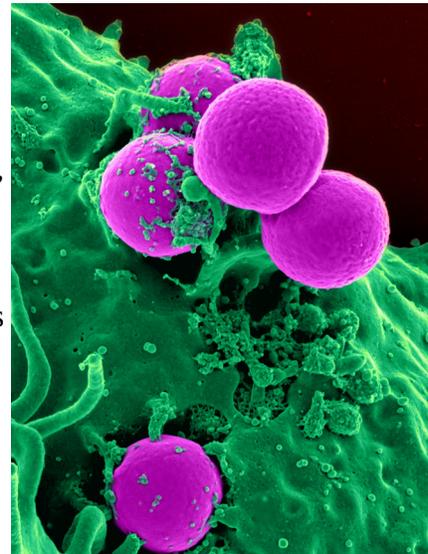


Sophia Anagnostou was still young when she developed leukemia. She experienced symptoms like headaches and body pain. Her skin became paler by the day until the day she took some medical tests that she was diagnosed with leukemia. In another case, Ashley was shocked when she was diagnosed with melanoma, a kind of skin cancer. Apparently, what Ashley thought was a simple mole on her skin was actually melanoma.

There are many instances that what is thought as normal is already a threat. From the examples of Sophia and Ashley, cancer is that living spy inside the body that just can not be detected early enough to be treated. A person can live his days normally for years, not knowing that he has cancer already destroying his body. Only once cancer has done enough damage that the person will realize the changes in his body and consult a doctor for medication; hence, according to Cancer Research UK, early diagnosis of cancer can likely increase the chances of survival of a person.



Cancer is a common global disease. Data from World Cancer Research Fund summarizes many cancer statistics worldwide in 2012. Lung cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer were leading as common cancers in the world for both sexes. There are differences in a number of cancer cases between men and women. Men are likely to get lung, prostate, and colorectal cancer, while women mostly get breast, colorectal, and lung cancer. The institution predicts that in 2035 cancer cases would grow to about 24 million, from 14.1 million cases in 2012. According to data from World Cancer Report 2014, high-income countries such as America and Japan have high cancer incidence rates.

These data tell us that cancer is not a disease to be underestimated. Yet why does cancer remain unnoticed by many for so long? Why does it take years before it is diagnosed? The answer has to do with how cancer develops and proliferates in the body. Although cancer is considered a disease, and it is usually assumed that diseases come from bacteria outside the body, cancer is a special kind of disease because it originates from the body. Cancer comes from your very own body cells. The very body cells that we love and take care of through nourishment becomes the body's enemies, as they slowly populate the body and kill its host.

Body cells become cancer cells when a certain checkpoint in the cell life cycle becomes disrupted. To fully understand this, a lesson about genetics will be given. As described by the Cancer Treatment Centers of America, cancer results from the uncontrolled division of body cells. From the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the division of body cells becomes out of control due to mutation of the genes. Certain genes in a cell serve as checkpoints for the cell life cycle. Because of natural mutation, these genes become inactivated or changed such that they cannot properly serve as checkpoints anymore. Thus the cell with the mutated genes will continue to proceed division; hence, this causes overpopulation of the surrounding site until tumor forms. At this time, cancer can be easily diagnosed, yet it could have already spread throughout the body. This happens when a mass of cancerous cells split into smaller masses. This makes cancer treatment harder.

Although natural mutation is a cause of cancer formation, certain experts profess that it does not ultimately cause cancer. As seen from Telegraph, Kate Allen tackles the common misconception that people can not prevent getting cancer. According to Doll and Peto, differences in cancer incidence in various countries is evidence that environmental factors may be a possible factor. They also say that cancer may be due to inheritance; that people who have "cancer" genes are likely to get cancer.

Due to the complex nature of cancer, it can be confusing for the ordinary person to plan what to do to prevent it. In fact, you can not fully prevent cancer; in other words, cancer involves a chance of risk or a chance of getting one. One can not completely achieve a zero-percent chance of having cancer. Yet there are ways to minimize the chance. Different researches of scientists have been beneficial since

they inform people of factors that primarily increase cancer. By avoiding these unhealthy lifestyle habits and environmental triggers, the risk of getting cancer significantly decrease.

Here are some ways on how to avoid cancer:

1. Refrain from smoking.

- When asking people the major factor in cancer risk, smoking is the most likely answer. Smoking has been associated with many major diseases like tuberculosis, bronchitis, and lung cancer. It does not mean that smoking causes these diseases, yet it makes people vulnerable to getting one.

- Smoking increases the risk of cancer because of the compounds it contains. According to David Carbone, nicotine—a chemical usually associated to cigarettes—and its derivatives are known to be carcinogenic. Carcinogenic compounds can promote cancer risk because they disrupt and damage the normal functions of a cell. Carcinogens will be discussed in detail later. Aside from getting cancer, a smoker is also vulnerable from getting lung diseases; in addition, a smoker can have side-effects like irritation, bad breath, and tooth decay. In other words, smoking can really kill.

- “Smoking is by far the biggest preventable cause of cancer.”, as noted by Cancer Research UK. Smoking is simply an optional lifestyle habit which people can choose to stop. Although it is not easy, seeking help and staying committed can make it possible for smokers to slowly quit smoking and lead a path to a healthier lifestyle.



2. Minimize alcohol drinking.

- Surprisingly, alcohols like wine and beer are associated with increased cancer risk. A common drinker might not easily suspect them as a cancer risk because it is not reported as a known carcinogen; on the contrary, alcohol is beneficial for the body since it promotes blood circulation. But studies show that it can be a factor for cancer development.

- As found in the National Cancer Institute, the more a person drinks alcohol the greater is his risk of cancer. One can get head, esophageal, liver, breast, and colorectal cancer just by drinking too much alcohol. Researchers say that acetaldehyde—a product of ethanol breakdown—is a possible carcinogen. Alcohol also produces free radicals which may harm the body’s cell processes. It also increases estrogen, which is thought to increase breast cancer risk. When people excessively drink and smoke, the risk is far greater than if they only do either one. However, researchers are still continuously studying the influence of alcohol on cancer.



- Although there still is not a strong connection between the two, it is best to play safe by minimizing alcohol drinking. Two to three drinks every other day is enough to enjoy the benefits of alcohol while avoiding the danger of cancer. Completely quitting on alcohol is also a good idea for those who are determined enough.

3. Stop eating the wrong food.

- Industrial agriculture has brought to us new ways of approaching food. Food preservation has improved significantly that people do not need to worry about food spoilage. Additives and flavorings allow food producers to create the perfect food product: nutritious, compact, and longer-lasting. Thus, these new techniques are a blessing to mankind; however, that is not always the case.

- Our food nowadays contains more than just additives. It may also contain carcinogens, thereby increasing the risk of cancer although the severity of the risk is unclear. Usually, studies correlate cancer risk to processed foods such as hotdogs and hams. According to the American Cancer Society, preservatives in processed food such as sodium nitrite have been known to be carcinogenic. Certain



Source:
<https://www.theodysseyonline.com/processed-meats-cause-cancer-what-you-need-to-know>

food processes such as cooking may destroy beneficial vitamins in the food that can fight off cancer. Smoking can make food unhealthy because compounds in the smoke, as discussed earlier, can stick to the food and be eaten by people.

- It does not mean that since food can contribute to cancer that one should stop eating altogether. The saying “too much is bad” still applies here. Diversifying meals and adding nutritious supplements is a good choice. Not only will decrease your risk of cancer you will also get the right nutrients you need for strong immunity.

4. **Avoid prolonged sun exposure.**

- People are mostly aware that staying under the sun for too long is bad for the skin. The sun’s rays contain ultraviolet radiation that damages the skin cells. It is the reason why after under the sun for too long our skin becomes red, a condition called sunburn. Sunburnt skin gradually peels off after some time because skin cells exposed too long from the sun die. The sun’s UV rays can also mutate the cells, thus increasing the chance of having skin cancer.



Avoiding lengthy sun exposure is easy to do; however, if your daily activities involve being under the sun for too long then there are ways to combat the sun’s harmful rays.

- Finding shade outdoors is one way. Trees and sheds can be helpful when one needs to stay away from the sun. Yet in some situations wherein there is no shade, sunblock can do the trick. Sunblocks are substances that can mitigate and reduce the effects of the sun’s rays. They are usually in the form of lotions or liquid sprays. When buying sunblocks, take note of its SPF. SPF stands for sun protection factor. It indicates how well the sunblock performs against the sun’s rays.

5. **Be wary of radiation.**

- Radiation has been studied well by researchers that there is no doubt it can really cause cancer. History is a living proof how radiation can be dangerous to humans, especially in high doses. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki serves as a reminder that nuclear weapons can devastate an area for a long time. Although people are safe



from nuclear weapons, radiation still persists in our environment, yet not enough that it can cause noticeable effects.

- The sun emits radiation constantly on our planet. It is a good example of natural radiation. Yet there is also artificial radiation that people have to watch out for. Artificial radiation comes from hospital machines that are used by radiologists to examine our internal body parts. It also comes from electronics such as television and computers.

- Radiation from hospital equipment does not pose risk to people since radiologists know and follow safety guidelines when using them. Radiation emitted from laptops and television do not have substantial amounts of radiation such that they can cause cancer. The National Cancer Institute says that use of electronics does not substantially increase cancer risk. Hence, there's no need to worry. However, for those whose activities involve being exposed to dangerous radiation like radiologists, value your health and be careful.

6. Be informed of carcinogens.

- Remember about carcinogens? Now, it's time to know. Again, carcinogens are compounds that increase the risk of a person getting cancer. From the American Cancer Society, some examples of carcinogens are acetaldehyde, aflatoxins, asbestos, and benzene. If you don't know some of the compounds mentioned, then you may be surprised that these compounds are part of our daily lives. Acetaldehyde can be found in alcoholic beverages. Aflatoxins are found in peanuts. Asbestos is used as an insulator for fires. Lastly, benzene is used for paints. In fact, many of the products people use are partly carcinogenic.

- But do not fret. It does not mean that carcinogens can instantly give cancer to people. Again, carcinogens only increase the risk. It may still take years before a person gets cancer due to carcinogens. Therefore, if you want to minimize your use of them, you may opt for other alternatives. Some DIY products are good alternatives for carcinogenic products. People exposed to carcinogens like chemists should wear protective masks to minimize inhaling them.

Completely preventing cancer seems to be an impossible feat. The environment, age, and genetics seem to be against people as they primarily influence the possibility of cancer. Thankfully, people can influence their environment. By taking note of lifestyle habits that trigger cancer, people can lessen the possibility of them having cancer. Health experts always stress the point that one should live healthily. Simply doing the basics of healthy living can go a long way in avoiding cancer. Heck, cancer might not even happen in your life if you live healthily.

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