

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 reduce 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 for an evaluation before beginning 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 from breast cancer. This is because exercise reduces estrogen levels, fights obesity, lowers insulin levels and boosts the function of immune system cells that attack tumors. Gaining weight after menopause increases a woman's risk for breast cancer — exercise helps fight weight gain. A healthy diet and regular physical activity may reduce your risk for breast cancer.



Leading a healthy lifestyle will not eliminate your risk of serious health problems like cancer, but it can help reduce your risk.

Nutrition

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

- Eat more fruits and vegetables. Strive to eat at least five servings per day.
- Eat more whole-grains and cereals. Whenever possible, choose whole-grain breads and cereals.
- Eat fewer high fat foods and concentrated sweets. Red meat, many dairy products and fried foods are leading sources of fat — avoid them, as well as processed sweets (cakes, doughnuts, cookies, etc.), when you can.

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 drinking less alcohol. 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 the key is moderation.

Many studies have also shown that high levels of alcohol intake increases the risk of breast cancer. In general, the more alcohol you consume, the higher your risk of developing the disease. If you drink alcohol, drink in moderation — less than one drink a day.

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.



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

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 health care ~

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

- Have mammograms and clinical breast exams done by a health care provider as recommended.
- Perform breast self-exams each month. (For step-by-step breast self-exam instructions, visit www.komen.org/bse.)
- Keep up with all your other regular appointments with your health care provider.

Related fact sheets in this series:

- breast cancer risk factors
- mammography

The Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation is not a health care provider and does not give medical advice. The information provided in this material is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or to replace the services of a medical professional.