



Healthy Women

Presented by the Coalition of Labor Union Women

Cancer in Women

Cancer of all types is on the increase. It is important to remember that women must be concerned with lung cancer as well as breast, cervical and ovarian cancer. One of the effects of menopause is a slowing of the immune system, which is associated with an increased cancer rate. Consequently, postmenopausal women may have an increased risk of cancer. In addition, a treatment for menopausal symptoms, hormone replacement therapy (HRT), may increase a woman's risk of cancer.

Below are some facts about cancer which you may need to be aware of in order to assess your own risks for cancer. Women should monitor their own risk factors for cancer, participate in healthy living practices to prevent cancer, and access early detection through regular checkups with their health care provider.

The Facts

- Cancer, the second leading cause of death among women, appears most often in the breast and the lungs.
- More than 50 percent of cancers in women are related to lifestyle factors such as smoking, obesity and diet, infectious diseases, reproduction and sexual behavior.
- New cases of breast cancer were the most commonly diagnosed new occurrences of cancer in 1997, more than double the incidence in any other single site.
- One in every eight women will develop breast cancer during her lifetime; after 50, the risk increases dramatically.
- Estrogen and hormone replacement therapy (ERT/HRT) treat the symptoms of menopause (hot flashes, etc.) and prevent some of the long-term health risks like osteoporosis, but may increase the risk of cancer.
- Women who are on HRT for at least 10 years face a 43 percent higher death rate.
- A breast cancer survivor is 10 times more likely to get osteoporosis because she is unable to take estrogen.
- According to the American Cancer Society, the overall cost—direct medical cost, morbidity and mortality—of cancer in the United States is \$104 billion per year.

Cancer Prevention

- ✓ Smoking cessation.
- ✓ Regular screenings such as pap smears and mammograms.
- ✓ Monthly self-exams.
- ✓ Reduced alcohol intake.
- ✓ Maintaining a healthy weight.
- ✓ Regular exercise.
- ✓ A low-fat, high-fiber diet.

Partner with your health care provider. Act now to prevent serious illness later.

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