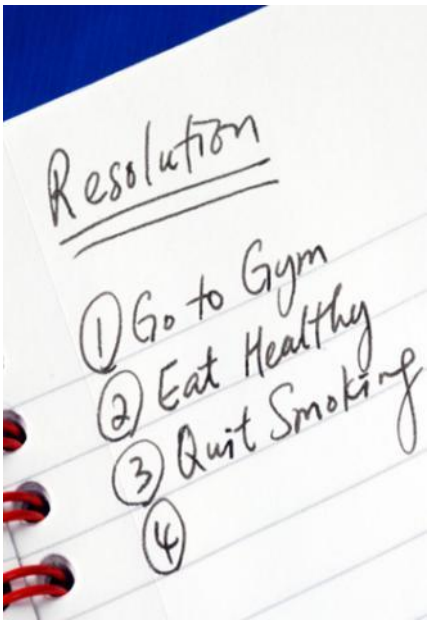

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· Amber Bauer, ASCO staff

Six Resolutions for a Healthier New Year [1]

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Did you know that about one-third of the deaths from cancer each year are preventable? That?s because many types of cancer are linked to specific lifestyle factors like an unhealthy diet, obesity, smoking, and a lack of physical activity. While not all cancers are preventable, the risk of developing a first or second cancer can be greatly reduced by making healthier choices, as can your risk of other serious disease like diabetes and heart disease.

The beginning of a new year is the perfect time to take control of your life and develop a plan to help you reach your goals for the year ahead. So if you are looking to improve your health in 2014, here are our top six resolutions:

(1) Stop using tobacco.

If you do nothing else, do this. Stopping tobacco use is the single most important thing you can do to reduce your risk of cancer. Smoking and other types of tobacco use has been linked to cancers of the lung, bladder, pancreas, kidney, nose and mouth, stomach, cervix, prostate, and colon, as well as heart disease, miscarriage, the common cold, ear infections, and asthma and

bronchitis among children who breathe in secondhand smoke. Tobacco products [2], including cigarettes, pipes, cigars, flavored cigars, and chewing tobacco cause at least 30% of all cancer deaths and kill more than 440,000 Americans each year. It is never too late to benefit from quitting, even if you have already been diagnosed with cancer [3]!

(2) Reach and maintain a healthy weight.

Being overweight or obese has been linked to a number of different health problems, including breast, colon, esophagus, kidney, prostate, and uterine cancers. When a person is overweight or obese, it means that they have too much body fat in relation to lean body tissue, such as muscle. Although losing weight can be difficult, being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day and eating a diet rich in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains can help you reach and maintain a healthy weight. Cancer.Net offers more information about weight control [4] and healthy eating [5] if you are interested in learning more.

(3) Exercise regularly.

Several studies have shown that regular physical activity can significantly reduce the risk of breast and colon cancers. What's more, there is evidence showing that exercise may also help prevent other types of cancer, such as uterine, prostate, kidney, and lower esophageal cancers. Regular physical activity also helps you increase your fitness level, lose or maintain weight, improve heart health, manage stress, and improve your mood and self-esteem. Talk with your doctor about an exercise plan that is appropriate for your medical history and individual fitness goals. Learn more about how physical activity lowers the risk of cancer [6], in addition to some recommendations on adding physical activity to your lifestyle [7].

(4) Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

Alcohol has been linked to cancers of the breast, colon, mouth, esophagus, liver, and larynx (voice box). Experts recommend that if you drink alcohol, you should limit yourself to one drink a day if you are a woman and two drinks a day if you are a man (whether it's a glass of wine, bottle of beer, or shot of hard liquor) and choose nonalcoholic beverages at meals and parties. Learn more about how alcohol [8] may influence cancer risk.

(5) Get recommended cancer screenings.

Cancer screenings [9] are examinations and tests done on people who are not having any symptoms to try to find cancer at an early stage. People with a family history of cancer may need to be screened earlier or more often than those without a family history of cancer. Talk with your doctor for information about cancer screenings that are appropriate for you. Common screening tests include:

- Mammography [10]: An x-ray of the breast used to find breast cancer.
- Pap test [11]: A test where cells are gently scraped from the inside of a woman's cervix and vagina and examined to find cervical cancer.
- Colonoscopy [12]: An examination that checks the upper and lower part of the colon with a thin, lighted tube.

(6) Protect your skin from the sun.

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer diagnosed in the United States. Although most skin cancers develop after age 50, skin damage from sun exposure begins much earlier in life. To protect yourself from the sun's ultraviolet rays, stay out of direct sunlight between 10:00 AM and 4:00 PM; wear a wide-brimmed hat, a long-sleeve shirt and pants; and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Read more about protecting your skin from the sun [13] and the symptoms of melanoma [14], the most serious and deadly form of skin cancer.

From everyone here at Cancer.Net, we wish you a happy and healthy New Year!

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