

8 tips to cancer-proof your body

Straight from the lab: Stealth strategies for keeping the Big C at bay

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By **Steve Mazzucchi**



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The average mouse doesn't care much about skin cancer. Outside of Disney cartoons, you won't see one slathering on sunscreen before heading out to dodge cats and search for cheese. But Gary Stoner, Ph.D., a professor emeritus of hematology and oncology at the Ohio State University medical center, does care about cancer. That's why he spends his days in a lab,

feeding rodents polyphenols from seaweed and learning how to shrink skin cancer–like tumors. He's a mouse's best friend. Maybe yours, too.

Stoner is just one of many researchers working to bring new weapons to the cancer battle. Some study humans to take a fresh look at existing theories. Others, like Stoner, are testing tactics so bold that, so far, their only subjects have tails and whiskers.

But all these approaches (seaweed included) have one very positive thing in common: They're just plain good for you and bad for cancer cells. Here are eight strategies that just may turn the Big C into the Big See-Ya-Later. (Or, better yet, See-Ya-Never.)

Drink pomegranate juice

Some say this luscious, lusty red fruit is Eve's original apple, but what the pomegranate truly banishes is cancer risk. The fruit's deep red juice contains polyphenols, isoflavones, and ellagic acid, elements researchers believe make up a potent anticancer combo. It's been shown to delay the growth of prostate cancer in mice, and it stabilizes PSA levels in men who've been treated for prostate cancer. And now University of Wisconsin at Madison researchers have learned that pomegranate may also inhibit lung-cancer growth. If you currently smoke, have smoked in the past, or hang around in smoky places (Cleveland, for instance), the juice of the fruit could bolster your defenses.

Use it: The mice in the Wisconsin study received the human equivalent of 16 ounces of juice per day, so quaff accordingly.

Eat blueberries

Got pterostilbene? Rutgers University researchers say this compound — found in blueberries — has colon cancer–fighting properties. When rats with colon cancer were fed a diet supplemented with pterostilbene, they had 57 percent fewer precancerous lesions after 8 weeks than rats not given the compound did. Eat blueberries and you'll also benefit from a big dose of vitamin C (14 milligrams per cup). In a study of 42,340 men, New England Research Institute scientists discovered that men with the highest dietary vitamin C intake (as opposed to supplements) were 50 percent less likely to develop premalignant oral lesions than men with the lowest intake were.

Use it: "About two servings daily is the human equivalent of what we fed the rats," says Bandaru Reddy, M.D., Ph.D., a chemical-biology professor at Rutgers. Load up at breakfast: A cup and a half of blueberries over cereal, plus 8 ounces of juice and half a grapefruit (for extra vitamin C), will do the trick. If that's too much to stomach at dawn, spread it out over the course of the day.

Relax a little

Purdue University researchers tracked 1,600 men over 12 years and found that half of those with increasing levels of worry died during the study period. Talk about flunking the exam. Only 20 percent of the optimists died before the 12-year study was completed. More anxiety-producing news: Thirty-four percent of the neurotic men died of some type of cancer. How neurotic are we talking? "Think of the biggest worrier you know — someone who stresses out over everything," says psychologist Daniel Mroczek, Ph.D., who conducted the study. "That man is probably above the 95th percentile in neuroticism. Then think of the most cool, calm, collected man you know. He's probably below the fifth percentile."

Prevention: Show cancer who's boss

Use it: To develop that critical, casual Jeff Spicoli vibe, learn to slow down your fast times: "The more time you spend in the present moment, the more relaxed you'll be, because most mental anguish occurs over stuff that's already happened or that may or may not happen in the future," says Claire Wheeler, M.D., Ph.D., the author of "10 Simple Solutions to Stress." "For the most part, right now is pretty damn good. If you practice being present while shaving, for example, eventually you'll also be more present when eating, making love, and working."



Pop selenium

Selenium has long been thought of as a cancer fighter, but you can have too much of a good thing, says David J. Waters, Ph.D., D.V.M., director of the Gerald P. Murphy Cancer Foundation, in West Lafayette, Indiana. A study of almost 1,000 men, published in the Journal of the National Cancer Institute, found that when those with the lowest initial levels of selenium in their bodies received a daily supplement over a 4 1/2- year period, they cut their prostate-cancer risk by an impressive 92 percent. But men who started out with high selenium were rewarded with an 88 percent increase in total cancer risk when they took the supplements. Moral: It pays to get your selenium level right.

Use it: Selenium in the body is measured through toenail clippings. Send yours to the Murphy Foundation, and for less than \$100 (price varies by state), they'll ship them to a lab and then

inform you of your level 2 weeks later. If yours is out of range, the foundation will explain how to adjust your intake of Brazil nuts, tuna, meats, grains, and selenium supplements. Learn more at www.seleniumhealthtest.com.

Order sushi

As mentioned, Gary Stoner is using seaweed to fight the Big C. When he fed the polyphenols from brown seaweed to mice that had been bombarded with UV rays, their incidence of skin tumors dropped 60 percent. And the polyphenols shrank existing tumors by 43 percent. Better still, the doses that produced these effects were the equivalent of only 1 or 2 tablespoons in a human being. "Seaweed is low in calories and fat, yet it provides heart-helping fiber, bone-building calcium and iron," says nutrition consultant Molly Morgan, R.D., C.D.N., owner of Creative Nutrition Solutions, in Vestal, New York. "Dried, roasted seaweed sheets used in making sushi also provide vitamins A and C."

Use it: "Eat more sushi rolls," says Stoner. "It's not quite the same seaweed, but it has some of the same compounds." As a bonus, sushi itself is a great muscle food. A typical spicy tuna roll has only 290 calories but packs 24 grams of protein. Also, look for a Korean-made, seaweed-fortified drink called EntroPower (entropower.com), which should be hitting U.S. health-food stores soon.

Spend more time outside

Scientists have viewed vitamin D as a potent cancer fighter for decades, but there's never been a gold-standard trial — until now. A Creighton University study published in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition found that women who supplemented their diets with 1,000 international units of vitamin D every day had a 60 percent to 77 percent lower incidence of cancer over a 4-year period than did women taking a placebo. "I don't think the effect is limited to women," says Joan Lappe, Ph.D., the lead study author. "Vitamin D is necessary for the best functioning of the immune system — it causes early death of cancer cells."

Use it: Nature intended us to make vitamin D from the sun, but depending on where you live, the time of year, and how much of an agoraphobe you are, you may not reach the optimal level of 80 nanomoles per liter of blood that way. A blood test can give you a baseline. From there, Lappe recommends supplementing with 1,100 to 2,000 IU of vitamin D in a stand-alone pill every day. Vitamin D is also in sardines, salmon, shiitake mushrooms, and reindeer meat — which may explain Santa's longevity, despite the odd hours and jelly belly.

Clear your air

Secondhand smoke may be even worse for you than we thought. A recent American Journal of Public Health study reveals that nonsmokers working in smoky places had three times the amount of NNK, a carcinogen, in their urine than nonsmoking workers in smoke-free joints had. And their levels of NNK rose 6 percent for every hour worked. "There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke, and the greater the exposure, the higher the risk," says the study's lead author, Michael Stark, Ph.D., principal investigator for the Multnomah County Health Department in Portland, Oregon.

Use it: Nine states have banned smoking in all workplaces, bars, and restaurants: Arizona, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington. So change locations, change professions, or change the laws. As you sip your pomegranate juice, sign up with Americans for Nonsmokers' Rights at no-smoke.org.

Invest a little sweat equity

Study after study has pointed to the cancer-beating power of exercise. Now research from Norway has found that even a tiny dose of exercise has big benefits. A study of 29,110 men published last year in the International Journal of Cancer shows that men who exercised just once a week had a 30 percent lower risk of metastatic prostate cancer than did men who didn't work out at all. Increasing the frequency, duration, and intensity of the exercise correlated with a further, gradual reduction in risk.

Use it: Just one bout of weekend warriorism — a company softball game, pickup basketball, racquetball with your crusty uncle — might qualify you for inclusion in the cancer-free 30 percent.

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