

**Circle Of Life<sup>SM</sup>: Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities**



**American Cancer Society Circle Of Life<sup>SM</sup>**  
*Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities*

## Wellness Along the Cancer Journey: Health Habits and Cancer Screening

Revised October 20, 2015



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**WELLNESS ALONG THE CANCER JOURNEY: HEALTHY HABITS AND CANCER SCREENING**

**Goals:** Those who take part will be able to discuss the importance of healthy behaviors that help maintain balance between one's body, mind, spirit, and environment.

**Objectives:**

- How can choices about what we eat and drink affect our health and well being?
- How can choices about exercise affect our health and well being?
- How do certain factors in the environment affect our health and well being?



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**Chapter 1: Module Overview**





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### **Module Overview**

Each cell of the body has DNA that serves as its genetic "blueprint". Cancer is caused by changes (mutations) in a cell's DNA. Some of these changes may be inherited from our parents. Others may be caused by a person's lifestyle or other factors. Lifestyle links may include poor nutrition, commercial tobacco use, and lack of exercise. For some, ultraviolet light, exposure to cancer-causing agents at home or at work, and pollution may play a role. For a few people, medical treatments like chemotherapy, radiation, and drugs that suppress the immune system after organ transplants may factor in.

About a third of the cancer deaths each year are linked to being overweight or obese – problems with nutrition and lack of physical activity. All of these could be prevented. We know that what we eat is linked to some types of cancer, but the exact reasons are not yet clear. The best advice is to get to and maintain a healthy body weight, eat plenty of vegetables, fruits, and whole grains rather than refined starches and sugars (like crackers, desserts, cereals). A person should also limit processed meats (like bacon, hot dogs, sausage, and luncheon meats), and red meats like beef, pork, and lamb. And adults should get at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity each week (or 75 minutes of vigorous physical activity).

Smoking or drinking alcohol cause some people to get certain types of cancer. All cancers caused by cigarette smoking and heavy use of alcohol could be prevented completely. The best thing is to never use commercial tobacco at all. Cigarettes, cigars, pipes and smokeless tobacco all cause cancer and should not be used. People who already smoke should try to quit -- former smokers have less risk of cancer than people who keep smoking.

Many of the more than 3.5 million skin cancers that are found each year could be prevented if people protect their skin from the sun's rays and avoid indoor tanning. The chances of getting skin cancer can be lowered by staying in the shade, wearing a hat and shirt when in the sun, and using sunscreen.

Certain cancers are linked to infectious diseases, such as:

- Hepatitis B Virus (HBV)
- Hepatitis C Virus (HCV)

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- Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)
- Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV)
- Helicobacter pylori (H. pylori)

Many of these infections can be prevented through behavior changes, medical care, and vaccines. We will discuss those later.

There is no way to prevent many cancers, but the best plan is to make healthy lifestyle choices and avoid risk factors that can be controlled. See Appendix A for a summary of the American Cancer Society Guidelines on the Screening & Early Detection of Cancer.

This module will discuss lifestyle and other factors linked to cancer and give basic information on things that people can do to reduce their cancer risk. It will cover cancer screenings that can help to find cancer at its earliest stages when it is easier to treat. The module will also discuss some ways that people can help to reduce the risk of cancer in their communities. One way, for instance, is by taking action to make the community a healthier place to live. Another is by sharing information with family and friends.