

CANCER RISKS

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Bladder Cancer: A recent Harvard study demonstrates a clear link between increased liquid intake and decreased incidence of transitional cell carcinoma of the bladder.

The study of 48,000 men found that those who drank at least 11 8-oz. glasses of liquid per day cut the risk of bladder cancer in half, compared with men who drank 5 glasses or less. It also found no increased bladder cancer risk with coffee or alcohol ingestion.

It is believed that bladder cancer begins when certain substances (such as chemicals from tobacco smoke) irritate the lining of the bladder. Drinking plenty of fluids may help by diluting the urine and reducing the time that harmful chemicals retain in the bladder.

Quitting smoking remains the best way to reduce the risk of this cancer.

Testicular Cancer: Public awareness of testicular cancer increased when survivor Lance Armstrong won the Tour de France bicycle race. A relatively rare disease, only 7,400 cases will be diagnosed in the United States next year, representing 1% of new male cancers. Prostate cancer is 30 times more common.

The incidence of testis cancer has risen 51% over the last 40 years. It is the most common form of cancer among men in their 20s and 30s. It is most common in white men, particularly those from Northern Europe. The only proven risk factor is undescended testis which is a factor in 14% of cancer cases.

Testis cancer is one of the most curable malignancies. Even with advanced stages of disease it has a five year survival rate of 95%. Self-exam is recommended beginning at age 15. Warning signs include a hard, painless lump attached to the testis or less commonly testicular enlargement and scrotal swelling.

Prostate Cancer: There are definite risk factors for prostate cancer. They include age, race and family history. After the age of 50, a man's risk of prostate cancer begins to rise rapidly with each passing decade. Men over the age of 65 account for more than 80% of prostate cancer cases. In addition, African American men are twice as likely as white American men to be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Prostate cancer in black men also tends to develop earlier.

It appears that approximately 10% of prostate cancers are inherited. Men whose fathers or brothers have prostate cancer run twice the risk of developing the disease. In addition, in families in which breast cancer is common among women, men may also have an above average risk for prostate cancer.

Suspected risks for development of prostate cancer include high fat diet. Research suggests that in particular the fat in red meat boosts the risk of prostate cancer. A substance found in tomatoes called lycopene has been shown to protect against prostate cancer. In addition, preliminary research suggests that Vitamin E and the mineral selenium may reduce prostate cancer risk. Diets rich in soy products have been linked to decreased risk of prostate cancer. Finally, regular physical activity may reduce the risk of prostate cancer.