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Reducing Your Risk of Cancer

Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death for both men and women across Canada.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, an estimated 25,600 Canadians will be diagnosed with lung cancer and 20,100 will die of it. On average, 70 Canadians will be diagnosed with lung cancer every day.

Avoid Exposure to Radon

Smoking is the number one cause of lung cancer, but following in the number two spot is a radioactive gas called radon. As the elements thorium, uranium break down, radioactive particles are released into the atmosphere.

Radon deteriorates quickly, giving off tiny radioactive particles. When inhaled, these radioactive elements can harm the cells that line the lung. It can seep into homes and Health Canada is warning that too many Canadians are being exposed to too much radon, causing more than 3000 lung cancer deaths each year.

Testing can determine if your home has raised radon levels. Radon detectors can be purchased and your home checked for problems.

Screen for H. Pylori and Hepatitis C

Screening to assess cancer risk has become quite common, but 2 tests that you won't regularly see are for H. pylori, the bacteria that can lead to stomach ulcers and cancer, and hepatitis C, which can also result in stomach cancer. 20% of those afflicted with this kind of cancer will not survive 5 years. An article in The Lancet Oncology is making the argument that testing for these infections should be routine.

Aspirin

Good old aspirin – the drug traditionally used for pain and inflammation and, more recently, to reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke – may have another use added to its resume: cancer prevention. 3 recent studies out of the University of Oxford suggest a role in reducing the risk of colon, stomach and breast cancer. It's not recommended yet, though, due to the potential for side effects.

Healthy Lifestyle

It shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone that they can reduce their risk of cancer by addressing their lifestyle behaviours but did you know you could potentially drop your risk by as much as 40%? Diet,

exercise, tobacco & alcohol use and screening demonstrate the greatest impact. While leading a healthy lifestyle isn't a guarantee of avoiding cancer, it's pretty darn good insurance.

Cancer is actually a group of diseases and treatment varies with type. Research and information abounds – if you are dealing with cancer, talk to our pharmacists to help understand what's happening.