

## Can We Reduce Our Cancer Risk?

In 2014 the World Health Organization presented a very interesting report that found many differences between countries with respect to cancer rates.

They use a term called Human Development Index (HDI), which is calculated using three factors: length and health of life, level of education and standard of living.

They reported that those countries having a high HDI with long and healthy lives, higher education and a decent standard of living have increased incidences of cancers of the lung, breast, prostate and colorectal cancer.

Countries with a low HDI have a higher incidence of cancers related to poverty and infection-related cancers: stomach, liver, cervix and esophagus. They also have a higher death rate. Africa, Asia, Central and South America account for 70% of the worlds cancer deaths.

“Countries in rapid societal, economic and lifestyle transitions are journeying towards an ever greater impact of cancer.” ~ WHO Report on Cancer 2014

As the HDI rises the types of cancer changes. For example as society transitions to a better situation, the incidence of breast cancer rises as the incidence of cervical cancer drops. As cigarette companies are promoting more tobacco developing countries, we will see the lung cancer risk rise within 20 years. Although endometrial cancer was not on this list, there was a study from Shanghai China that showed there was a 75% increase in cancer of the uterus which paralleled the rise of obesity and reduction of activity.

Here are the risk factors that contribute to cancer:

- **Smoking** accounts for 30% of the risk, increasing the risk not only of lung cancer but also oral, nasal, esophageal, leukemia, pancreas, liver, stomach, colon, bladder and more!
- **Alcohol** Increases the risk of cancers of the mouth, larynx, esophagus, liver, colo-rectal, female breast, pancreas, prostate, lung and kidney. This is because when ethanol is metabolized to acetaldehyde, it is toxic to our genetic makeup. What was seen in 2010 reflects the alcohol consumption

in the early 1990s. The risk is even greater for oral cancers in those who smoke.

- **Obesity, poor dietary habits and lack of exercise** account for another 35%, increasing the risk of breast cancer in postmenopausal women, endometrial cancer, ovarian cancer, esophageal adenocarcinoma , colorectal, prostate and renal cancer.

30 to 60 minutes/day of moderate to vigorous exercise can reduce the risk of cancer:

- Breast cancer by 30-40%
- Endometrial cancer by 38-50%
- Colon cancer by 30-40%
- Lung cancer by 20%

A recent study in JAMA 2016 added several more to this list:

- Liver
- Stomach
- Kidney
- Myeloid leukemia
- Multiple myeloma
- Head and Neck
- Lung
- Rectum
- Bladder

When it comes right down to it, only 15% of cancers are hereditary.

So we have a lot to do to reduce our risk of developing cancer.

Are you up to the challenge?