

## EUROPE AGAINST CANCER



A code for living

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CODE AGAINST

CANCER

*Supported by 3M*

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### A Code for living

'Europe against Cancer' is a campaign aimed at reducing the number of deaths from cancer by 15% by the year 2000. It has the support of all those active in the fight against cancer throughout the European Community – cancer specialists and general practitioners, the cancer charities, health and education authorities, and other organisations concerned with the health of the public.

#### *A code for living*

Cancer is a disease, which starts with a change in one of the body's many millions of cells. This then multiplies and can spread through the body often affecting vital organs. We do not yet know what causes a cell to become cancerous but scientists believe that most causes are linked with our environments and how we live.

In this country, one in every three people will develop cancer at some time in their lives. Most of these cases will occur in people over the age of 60. But cancer may take decades to develop, and we know that if we are prepared to make certain changes in how we live, we can help to protect ourselves.

Although there is no way guaranteeing we will not develop cancer, the European code against cancer summarises in 10 points the practical advice that can help reduce our risk of developing certain types.

If after you have read this leaflet, you would like more information, the Health Education Authority has published a free booklet "Can you avoid cancer; a guide to reducing your risks", which should be available through your public library, your GP, health clinic or local health education unit or cancer society.

#### *Certain Cancers may be avoided*

1. **Do not smoke, Smokers, stop as quickly as possible and do not smoke in the presence of others.** Cigarette smoking causes a third of all cancer deaths. At least 90% of lung cancers are due to smoking. Smoking also increases the risk of cancer of the mouth, voice box, gullet, bladder and cervix. The longer someone smokes the more dangerous it becomes; the good news is that the risk begins to fall as soon as you stop smoking.
2. **Moderate your consumption of alcoholic drinks, beers, wines or spirits.** Drinking too much alcohol has been linked to about 3% of cancers, especially those of the mouth, voice box, gullet and liver. The risk is even higher if you smoke and drink heavily. A sensible limit is two or three pints of beer or four or five glasses of wine or measures of spirit two or three times a week – less if you are a woman.
3. **Avoid excessive exposure to the sun.** Too much sun can cause skin cancer, so remember to protect your skin in the sun, especially during holiday's abroad in hot countries. Tan slowly, avoid sunburn and use sun filter creams and lotions – lots and often. You should take special care if you are fair-haired or have a skin, which tends to burn in the sun.
4. **Follow health and safety instructions at work concerning production, handling or use of any substance, which may cause cancer.** There are a number of chemicals and processes in the workplace that can cause cancer. These include asbestos, vinyl chloride, some wood dusts, some types of tar and soot, some chemical dyestuffs and radiation. They are strictly controlled by Health and Safety

Regulations and if you are in any doubt about health risks at work, talk to your works doctor or health and safety representative.

**Your general health will benefit from the following two points of the code, which may also reduce the risk of some cancers.**

5. **Frequently eat fresh fruits and vegetables and cereals with high fibre content.** There is some evidence that foods rich in pro-vitamin A and vitamin C may give protection against cancer. Most fruit and vegetables contain these vitamins and vitamin A is also present in fish. Food containing fibre is found in fresh fruit and vegetables but mostly in whole-grain cereals and bread. These vitamins and fibre are best obtained through natural food.
6. **Avoid becoming overweight and limit your intake of fatty foods.** Some cancers are associated with extreme overweight. Eating a lot of meat, butter and airy products may give a higher risk of breast and bowel cancer as well as other problems such as coronary heart disease. Eat lean meat and try fish, chicken or rabbit instead of red meat. Bake, grill or microwave instead of frying. Use skimmed or semi skimmed milk. Regular exercise and a sensible diet will help keep your weight down and reduce the risk.
7. **See a doctor if you notice a lump, or observe a change in a mole, or abnormal bleeding.** Many common cancers can be successfully treated if detected early. A lump, abnormal bleeding or a change in a wart or mole is not necessarily symptoms of cancer, but they should be checked out, so consult your doctor without delay and avoid unnecessary worry.
8. **See a doctor if you have persistent problems, such as a persistent cough, a persistent hoarseness, a change in bowel habits or an unexplained weight loss.** It sounds obvious that if there is an unexplained change in your normal health, you should see a doctor. In reality it's all too easy to carry on and hope it will go away. Few symptoms are likely to be caused by cancer, but whatever the real cause the sooner you act the better.

#### **For Women**

9. **Have a cervical smear regularly.** The smear test can detect abnormal changes in the cells of the neck of the womb before cancer has actually developed and when it is possible to prevent it starting. If cervical cancer is detected and treated at an early stage, it too is curable. Every woman who is, or has been, sexually active should have a smear test every 3-5 years. If you have never had a smear test, or have not had one within the last five years, go to your doctor or family planning clinic and ask for one.
10. **Check your breasts regularly, and, if possible, undergo mammography at regular intervals above the age of 50.** Women should examine their own breasts each month and there are leaflets that explain how to do this. If you notice any lumps, a dimple or puckering or any other changes, see your doctor at once. Remember, most lumps are not cancer but it's best to be sure. For women over 50, regular screening by mammography is advisable, to detect breast cancer at the earliest possible stage when treatment is usually simpler and offers the best likelihood of cure.

**This leaflet was produced for the 'Europe against cancer' campaign with the support of 3M United Kingdom PLC.**