TuSalud

How Much Do You Know About Cancer Risk?

Only one in four Americans say they incorporate cancer prevention into their daily lives, according to a recent study.

October 30, 2019 By Casey Halter

Research shows that as many as half of all cancer in the United States is preventable. So why don't more Americans know about the everyday cancer risks affecting them?

According to new data from the American Society of Clinical Oncology's (ASCO) annual National Cancer Opinion Survey, 6 in 10 adults in the United States say they are concerned about developing cancer in their lifetime. However, just one in four Americans say they incorporate cancer prevention into their daily lives.

A quarter of Americans also said they believe there is nothing they can do to prevent cancer––despite hundreds of studies showing that cutting back on tobacco use, drinking and sun exposure and making positive diet and exercise choices can do just that.

Here are some of the top misconceptions:

- Alcohol. According to ASCO guidelines, alcohol use, including light or moderate drinking, raises the risk of several types of cancer. Yet only 31% of survey respondents recognize alcohol as a risk factor.
- Obesity raises the risk of 13 different kinds of cancer, according to the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC). Yet just 36% believe weight is tied to cancer.
- E-cigarettes. While vaping has not been shown to cause cancer, it does damage DNA. Plus, the current outbreak of vaping-related lung damage has affected thousands and is associated with dozens of deaths. Yet nearly one in four young adults think e-cigarettes are harmless.

Many survey respondents were also needlessly worried about certain cancer risks—for example, a "substantial minority" of Americans believe that artificial sweeteners and cell phones raise cancer

risk, although evidence doesn't support those claims. Survey data also found that 8 in 10 adults in the United States believe there is a lot of information out there about daily risks for cancer, but most have difficulty telling what is credible.

The study, which surveyed over 4,000 adults ages 18 and older, including 1,009 adults who have or have had cancer, was conducted to help researchers better understand Americans' views on a range of cancer-related issues. The survey is also used to expose problem areas that are important for providers to address.

"This year's findings raise concerns about the current state of cancer prevention in America and strongly support the need for more education on the topic, beginning at a young age," said ASCO president Howard A. Burriss, MD, in a recent press release about the study, adding "We urge every American to have regular conversations with their physician about reducing their risk of cancer and other chronic diseases."

For those interested in doctor-approved sources around cancer risk, check out ASCO's patient information website, Cancer.Net. The organization also recommends looking for information at the websites of the National Cancer Institute and the CDC.

ASCO's cancer survey also found that most people affected by cancer aren't discussing end-of-life care with their doctors. To read the full study, click here.

To discover five things that cause cancer and five that probably don't, click here.

To learn more about how to prevent cancer, click here.

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