Are there steps I can take to reduce my risk of cancer?

Your question is very topical—and the answer is yes. At the end of October 2007, the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) released a very important report on this subject. It is the most comprehensive ever published on the link between cancer and diet, physical activity (exercise), and body weight. Seven thousand studies were used as the basis for the analysis of the data. The panel that constructed the report was composed of 21 world-renowned scientists. Among the official observers of the report’s process and progress were UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).

Keeping your body weight at a healthy level is one of the most important things you can do to prevent cancer. There is convincing evidence that at least six different kinds of cancer are related to increased body fat. These include cancer of the large bowel (colorectal cancer) and breast cancer that occurs after menopause.

The recommendation from the WCRF is to be as lean as possible within the healthy range and to avoid gaining weight throughout adulthood. If one is overweight one should aim to reduce weight. This is a lifelong commitment and sometimes a struggle! We know that from our own personal experience.

Other important findings of the WCRF include the following:

- Processed meats increase the risk of colorectal cancer.
- The evidence that red meat is a cause of colorectal cancer is very strong. The WCRF recommends that people should not eat more than 500 grams, or approximately 1 pound (in cooked weight), of red meat per week.
- Breastfeeding is strongly recommended. Mothers are advised to breastfeed exclusively for six months. Thereafter they are urged to continue breastfeeding as part of the feeding scheme (complementary breastfeeding). Breastfeeding helps to protect the mother against breast cancer. It is probable that breastfeeding also protects the child against obesity in later life.
- Dietary supplements are not recommended for cancer prevention. We have shared studies previously that show that substances such as beta carotene, when taken as a supplement, can increase the incidence of cancer.
- The evidence that alcohol causes cancer is stronger now than ever before. This emphasizes yet another already known health hazard of alcohol. It also gives perspective to the recommendation that some make that one should take a glass of wine daily to improve heart health; well, one glass of wine daily is sufficient to cause a significant increase in breast cancer in women in menopause! Exercise and weight control are able to improve heart health and protect against cancer. Why should one then take the risk of drinking alcohol when it can be addictive, is a proven carcinogen (agent in the causation of
cancer), and impairs judgment and choices?

Other recommendations for cancer prevention:

- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day. Any type of activity counts. The more you do, the better.
- Avoid sugary drinks and processed foods high in sugar and fat and low in fiber.
- Eat more vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and legumes.
- Limit consumption of salty foods and food processed with salt.
- After treatment for cancer, cancer patients should follow the guidelines for cancer prevention.
- Never chew, smoke, or snuff tobacco.

These recommendations echo and reflect the counsel given by Ellen White starting with the 1863 health vision. These same principles have been confirmed by the Loma Linda University Adventist Health Studies and are now formulated as prevention guidelines throughout the world. It is important to note that cancer has many varied causes. Preventive measures delay and modify these other factors, but do not guarantee a cancer-free life this side of the kingdom.

*www.wcrf-uk.org/research_science/recommendations.lasso*