

Identifying Your Risks with Your Family Health Tree

Your health tree should include parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters. For each relative, write down all of the person's significant medical conditions or disorders, plus surgical procedures, including at what age they occurred or were detected. Also note any health related habits such as smoking or drinking.

Now you are ready to look at your family tree and determine your risks for the top causes of death and choose your preventive health behaviors.

10 Top Causes of Death for American Women

Ages 55 - 74	Ages 75+
1. Cancer	Heart Disease
2. Heart Disease	Cancer
3. Lung Disease	Stroke
4. Stroke	Pneumonia, Flu
5. Diabetes	Lung Disease
6. Pneumonia, Flu	Diabetes
7. Accidents	Accidents
8. Cirrhosis of Liver	Atherosclerosis
9. Artery Disease	Alzheimer's Disease
10. Kidney Failure	Septicemia (Blood Poisoning)

Heart Disease

#1 leading cause of death for American Women, but there are seven risk factors you can do something about – high blood pressure, smoking, high blood cholesterol levels, lack of a regular exercise program, overweight, diabetes and stress.

American Cancer Society reports that the **#1 cancer killer for American women is lung cancer** (52,000 deaths/year). Next is breast cancer (40,000 deaths) and colon/rectum cancer (29,000 deaths).

Endometrial Cancer

#1 gynecological cancer, higher incidence in white women but almost twice the mortality for African American women.

Risks include estrogen replacement therapy without progesterin, tamoxifen, early menses, late menopause, not having children, obesity, and failure to ovulate regularly.

Warning Sign – abnormal uterine bleeding and any bleeding after menopause.

Ovarian Cancer

#2 gynecological cancer

Risks increases with age, family history and women who have not had children. Talcum powder in the perineal area may increase risk.

Pregnancy, exercise and use of oral contraceptives may be protective.

Most frequent Sign – enlargement of the abdomen by accumulation of fluid appears late in the disease.

Cervical Cancer

#3 gynecological cancer

Risks - 93% linked to human papillomavirus (HPV), genital warts. Also intercourse at an early age, multiple partners or a partner who has multiple partners, HIV infection and cigarette smoking. Virus is spread by skin-to-skin contact, rather than through ejaculate, so condoms are ineffective in prevention.

Signs --abnormal bleeding or spotting or any abnormal discharge--come too late to warn
PAP Smears can provide early detection. It is more effective if no douching, insertion of spermicidal or vaginal medication, or intercourse less than 48 hours before exam.

Vulvar Cancer

#4 gynecological cancer

Risk increases with HPV infection. Most frequent **sign** is vulvar itching. Early detection, biopsy and treatment prevent spread.

Cancer of the Vagina

Rare, **risk** increases with age. Daughters whose mothers took diethylstilbesterol have a peak incidence at 17 yr. with the disease being rare if older than 30 yr.

Breast Cancer

#2 cancer in women (#1 lung cancer)

Risks - 1 in 9 lifetime risk, increases with age, no children, early menses, late menopause. Estrogen replacement therapy, alcohol use (2 or more drinks/day) and obesity may increase. Family history is found in only 6% of women.
Prevention – lactation and exercise may prevent. Soy taken in early life, orange peel oil, green tea, tomatoes, fish oils, low fat diet and vitamin E may protect.

Early Detection Guidelines

American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org>

- 20 or older – breast self-examination (BSE) every month
- 20 to 39 a clinical breast examination by a health professional every 3 years.
- 40 and older breast exam by a health professional and a yearly mammogram

Colorectal Cancer

#3 cause of cancer death in women

Risks – polyps in the colon, low fiber, high fat diet and inflammatory bowel disorder.

Warning Signs

- A change in bowel habits
- A feeling to have a bowel movement that is not relieved by doing so
- Rectal bleeding or blood in the stool
- Cramping or steady abdominal (stomach area) pain
- Decreased appetite
- Weakness and fatigue
- Jaundice (yellow-green discoloration of the skin and white part of the eyes).

Early Detection

- 40 and older – an annual rectal examination
- 50 and older – annual stool test for hidden blood and Sigmoidoscopy of the rectum and part of the colon every five years

Depression

Rate – lifetime 21% of women (12% of men)

Most get the "blues" occasionally but if depression lasts longer than a few weeks – saps your energy, causes physical problems, and/or causes you to lose interest in living – its time to get help (<http://helping.apa.org>).

Relief – best way is regular brisk exercise.

Osteoporosis

Risks for "brittle bones" include: smoking, heavy alcohol or caffeine consumption; Caucasian or Asian heritage; small, thin frame; family history of osteoporosis; menopause before age 45; lack of exercise; and low intake of calcium and/or vitamin D. For more information go to <http://www.nof.org>.

Prevention = Calcium

A glass of nonfat milk supplies 300mg

- Pre-teen – 1200mg/day
- 25-50 yr. – 1000mg/day
- > 50 yr. – 1500mg/ day

Tips to Decrease Your Risks

- Don't smoke. – It greatly increases your risk of cancer of the mouth, lung, bladder, pancreas, cervix, and possibly breast & colon.
- Restrict or avoid alcohol to decrease the risk of several cancers.
- Avoid being overweight to lessen the risk of heart disease and diabetes but may also help prevent breast and uterine cancer.
- Restrict time in the sun and use sunscreen. If you notice any unusual skin condition, any change in a mole or other growth or spot, see your health care provider without delay.
- Eat a diet low in plant and animal fats --may decrease endometrial and ovarian cancer-- and high in complex carbohydrates, grains, fruits and vegetables. This also gives you added vitamins and fiber.
- Learn how to do monthly skin, breast and genital self-exams.
- Get regular health screenings – pap tests, pelvic exams, mammograms and colon-cancer exams – based on your health risks.

Women's Health



Maintenance Agreement



- **Identify Your Risks**
- **Adopt Healthy Lifestyles**
- **Practice Preventive Health Behaviors**

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