Richard Schilsky, MD, past president of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) and current Executive Editor of the ASCO Web site CancerProgress.Net states “The big news is that cancer mortality rates continue to go down, and have been for quite some time,” he told Medscape Medical News. “This is true for cancer in general, and especially for the most common cancers.”

However, it is clear that other cancers are on the rise, said Dr. Schilsky, who is Professor of Medicine, Chief of Hematology/Oncology, and Deputy Director of the Comprehensive Cancer Center, University of Chicago, Illinois. “We haven’t seen these declines in some segments of the population, especially African Americans.”

Identifying the rising incidence of some cancers can be helpful. “At least in some cases, there may be an underlying explanation that we can work with and hopefully resolve,” he said.

Dr. Schilsky added that some of the best news is that more than 1 million deaths attributable to cancer have been averted over the past decade. “That is very encouraging.”

For 2012, the ACS estimates that there will be 1.6 million new cases of invasive cancers, and 577,190 cancer-related deaths - corresponding to more than 1,500 deaths per day.

For men, prostate, lung and bronchus, and colorectal cancers will be the most common cancers diagnosed, and will account for approximately 50% of all newly diagnosed cases. Prostate cancer alone will account for 29% (241,740) of incident cases.

For women, breast, lung and bronchus, and colorectum cancers will be the 3 most commonly diagnosed types of cancer, and will also account for approximately half of all new cases. Breast cancer alone is expected to account for 29% (226,870) of all newly diagnosed cancers.

“The importance of trends is that they point us in the right direction,” said Dr. Elizabeth Ward, PhD. National Vice President of Intramural Research for the American Cancer Society. “If a cancer type is increasing, it is important to know the causes. This will encourage more studies to investigate these findings.”

The authors have disclosed no relevant financial relationships.

Please donate to the ACS for research.

Safety of Supplements in Cancer Survivors

By Elizabeth Norris, RN, BSN, OCN

Cancer Survivors Want to Know:

What supplements can I take to give me the best Quality of Life (QOL) while keeping my cancer at bay? Specific issues include hot flashes in menopausal women, and erectile dysfunction in men. Osteoporosis is a concern no matter what your gender. So what is safe to take and what is not?

A common misconception people have is that over the counter (OTC) vitamins and supplements “can’t hurt me”. The truth is that they can. However, that does not mean that certain supplements are “off the table” just because you’ve had cancer.

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Living with Cancer and BEYOND

By Lisa Mayers
Retrieved from Southern Tier's Source for family health, "Healthy Life," magazine. Summer 2011-Issue 32

Self-love, trust, surrender, appreciation, faith…..Those are just the gifts that cancer can leave in its wake. Ask Stephanie, for whom breast cancer came out of the blue.

“I was 42 years old with virtually no risk factors,” she said. “This just wasn’t supposed to be happening to me.” She had no symptoms and right up until the moment she got the news, she never even suspected she might have cancer.

“I decided right from the start that I wanted to maintain as much normalcy as possible,” Stephanie explained. “This was a bump in the road – no more than that. I needed to find a path that would take me from A to B and get past it.”

Although it wasn’t easy, Stephanie appreciated her blessings. “Everything was in my favor – I was young and in good physical condition. I had my faith, supportive friends and family, great doctors – and health insurance,” she said.

Diagnosed on May 24, Stephanie completed her last radiation treatment on Christmas Eve, December 24 that year. “Christmas was quite a celebration that year,” said Stephanie. “I forget how good it feels to feel like yourself again,” Stephanie explained. “And yet, you’re changed – physically, mentally, and spiritually. It made me realize more deeply and on a much more personal level, the power of faith and prayer. It also gave me a great sense of compassion and empathy for others going through it.”

Four years later, Stephanie is still cancer free. “It’s always there in the back of your mind. I don’t focus on it, but it’s there. I know there’s always the possibility. So, every year I announce the good news to all my friends and family,” she says.

Announcing that she had cancer was the most difficult part of having leukemia for Trish. “My husband and I were the only ones who knew for about a month after I was diagnosed,” she recalls. “My parents were out of town at the time and I knew telling them would be tough. I wanted to wait until I had all the information.”

Trish hadn’t had any symptoms. It was a soccer injury that inadvertently led to the discovery of Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia: cancer of the bone marrow and blood. She was just 40 years old at the time. She was told that her leukemia was treatable, not curable. A positive outcome is remission. Treatment is a daily duty to live my life to the fullest and to respect and appreciate this gift of life I’ve been given. It’s not that little things don’t sometimes annoy me, but then I stop and think about the big picture and I find appreciation again.”

When Trish talk about how she got through the last two years and how she manages day-to-day now, she never fails to mention the support of her husband. “My husband was – and still is, my rock,” said Trish.

Although the experience of having cancer, living through it, and moving on with your life is different for everyone, there are some things that appear to be pretty common threads. Acceptance stands out as one of them. It’s releasing a sense of resistance and surrendering not to defeat, but to the experience itself. It’s allowing yourself to go through it in whatever way works for you. It’s allowing others to assist you and appreciating the blessings-in whatever form they take. And then it’s moving forward, staying present, and enjoying each new day you’re given.
Fitting Fitness into Survivorship

By Francine Rainone DO, PhD, MS
Medical Director of Palliative Care Service

It’s easy for exercise to get pushed to the bottom of your to-do list, even when you’re not facing cancer. But when fatigue or other unpleasant treatment side effects make staying active even more of a challenge, you may be tempted to give up on it altogether. However, the positive effects that exercise has on your body and mind make staying active a smart choice, especially during cancer treatment. The key is to make exercise work for you.

Breaking up exercise into smaller amounts can be a good way for people with cancer to reap the benefits of being active without pushing themselves in an unhealthy way. Every little bit counts – and the same is true for people who don’t have cancer. According to new guidelines from the American Cancer Society, performing moderate exercise for a total of 150 minutes each week can help reduce the risk of some cancers and other diseases. Short sessions of activity count toward the overall total. That means even if you can’t spend an hour on the treadmill, taking 3 20-minute walks can be just as effective for your health. So, if you’re up to it, why not invite a friend, relative, or caregiver to join you for a short stroll? You both can reap the healthy benefits. There are some important things to consider when it comes to exercise during cancer treatment. The first is making sure that you and your care team are both comfortable with any activity you plan to do. Always check with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.

Next is understanding that you may not be able to work out at the same level you could before diagnosis and treatment. You may need to take things slower, break exercise up into smaller amounts, and modify the types of exercise you do.

Last but not least is realizing that the most basic forms of staying active – whether that means taking a daily walk, staying on top of your regular chores, or doing some basic stretches – all can help you maintain a greater level of fitness than doing nothing at all. A little bit of movement goes a long way.

With that in mind, there are many simple forms of exercise that can help you move more during your regular routine. Small amounts of activity do add up, so don’t be afraid to get busy and stay active. For example:

• Skip that front-row parking spot and aim for a spot a bit farther away so you have to walk to get to your destination.
• Don’t wait for the elevator – use the stairs instead.
• Do some simple but rigorous household chores, such as scrubbing the bathroom.
• Grab some light hand weights (or even some cans from the cupboard) and do some arm curls as you watch TV or read.
• Put on a few of your favorite songs and dance in your living room.
• Take 10 minutes at lunchtime to stretch or take a quick walk.

Safety of Supplements in Cancer Survivors

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For example, many female cancer survivors experience hot flashes, either because of menopause or as a side effect of hormonal therapy. They may look to supplements such as black cohosh, red clover, evening primrose oil, and soy, as they are rumored to decrease the flashes. The concern is that these OTC supplements can act like estrogen, and may stimulate the growth of cancer in estrogen receptive tumors. More studies are needed to determine if these products are safe to take, especially in breast cancer survivors. Talk to your cancer doctor before taking these supplements.

The prostate cancer survivor may have issues with erectile dysfunction, because of a low testosterone level. The concern here is that supplementing with testosterone could feed the prostate cancer and cause the disease to return or spread. But low testosterone can cause decreased sex drive, loss of muscle mass, energy and bone strength, all important QOL issues. More recent studies are showing that testosterone replacement therapy is safer than originally thought, even if there is a history of prostate cancer. Talk to your doctor regarding your particular cancer history to see if this therapy could be helpful to you.

Everyone worries about osteoporosis as they age, and cancer survivors are living longer. They want to remain active and protect their bones too. Bone loss is a potential long term side effect of cancer treatment. Taking a calcium supplement can help if your diet is deficient, but taking too much calcium is associated with problems such as kidney stones. Talk to your doctor or a registered dietician regarding the need for calcium supplements and how much you should take.

A Thought to Ponder On

If My Body...

If my body were a car, this is the time I would be thinking about trading it in for a newer model.

I’ve got bumps, dents and scratches in my finish and my paint job is getting a little dull, but it’s not the worst of it.

My fenders are too wide to be considered stylish. They were once as sleek as a little MG; now they look more like an old Buick.

My seat cushions have splits open at the seams. My seats are sagging. Seat belts? I gave up all belts when Krispy Crème opened a shop in my neighborhood!

Air bags? Forget it! The only bags I have these days are under my eyes. Not counting the saddlebags, of course.

I have soooooo many miles on my odometer. Sure, I’ve been many places and seen many things, but when’s the last time an appraiser factored life experiences against depreciation?

My headlights are out of focus and it’s especially hard to see things up close.

My traction is not as graceful as it once was. I slip and slide and skid and bump into things even in the best of weather.

My whitewalls are stained with varicose veins. It takes me hours to reach my maximum speed.

My fuel burns inefficiently.

But here’s the worst of it – almost every time I sneeze, cough or sputter…either my radiator leaks or my exhaust backfires!