

Are You Taking the Right Steps TO PREVENT CANCER?

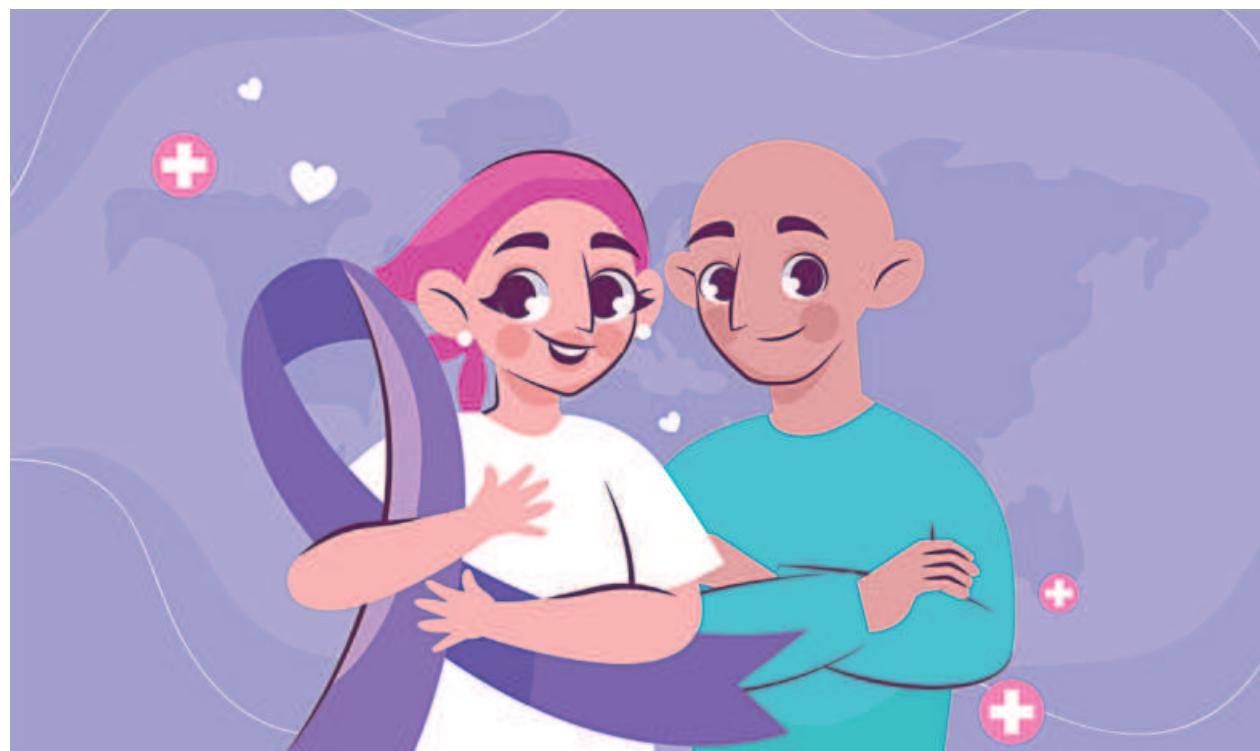
Cancer prevention begins with awareness and action. However, for those already battling cancer, timely diagnosis, treatment, and emotional support are just as crucial.

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Cancer is a growing health concern in Bangladesh, with rising cases of various types such as lung, breast, cervical, and oral cancers. While genetic factors and environmental exposures play a role, lifestyle choices significantly influence cancer risk. On World Cancer Day, it is crucial to raise awareness about how simple changes in daily habits can help prevent cancer and improve overall health. Here are some practical steps Bangladeshis can take to reduce their risk of cancer.

Quit Tobacco Use

Tobacco is one of the leading causes of cancer worldwide, responsible for lung, oral, throat, and other cancers. In Bangladesh, the use of cigarettes, bidis, and smokeless tobacco like zarda and gul is widespread. Quitting tobacco is the single most effective way to reduce cancer risk. If you or someone you know uses tobacco, seek support from healthcare providers, counselling services, or cessation programmes. Avoiding second-hand smoke is equally important.



**World
Cancer Day
4 February**

Adopt a Healthy Diet

A balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins can significantly lower cancer risk. Processed and red meats, on the other hand, are linked to colorectal and stomach cancers. Traditional Bangladeshi diets, which often include rice, fish, lentils, and vegetables, are already a good foundation. However, reducing the consumption of fried foods, sugary snacks, and processed

items is essential. Incorporate more colourful fruits and vegetables like carrots, spinach, tomatoes, and oranges, as they are packed with antioxidants that protect cells from damage.

Maintain a Healthy Weight

Obesity is a risk factor for several cancers, including breast, colorectal, and pancreatic cancers. In Bangladesh, urbanisation and changing dietary habits have led to an increase in obesity rates. Regular physical activity, such as walking, cycling, or playing sports, can help maintain a healthy weight. Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise daily. Even small changes, like taking the stairs instead of the lift, can make a difference.

Avoid Alcohol Consumption

Alcohol is a known carcinogen linked to cancers of the liver, mouth, throat, and breast. While alcohol consumption is

relatively low in Bangladesh compared to other countries, it is still important to limit intake or avoid it altogether.

Protect Yourself from Infections

Certain infections, such as human papillomavirus (HPV) and hepatitis B and C, can increase cancer risk. Vaccines are available to protect against these infections. For example, the HPV vaccine can prevent cervical cancer, while the hepatitis B vaccine reduces the risk of liver cancer. Ensure that you and your family are up-to-date on vaccinations and practice safe hygiene to avoid infections.

Practice Safe Sun Exposure

Skin cancer, though less common in Bangladesh, can still occur due to prolonged exposure to ultraviolet (UV) rays. When spending time outdoors, especially during peak sunlight hours, use sunscreen with an SPF (Sun Protection Factor) of at least 30, wear

protective clothing, and seek shade whenever possible.

Properly Washing Fruits and Vegetables

In Bangladesh, fruits and vegetables are often treated with insecticides and preservatives, making proper cleaning essential. Washing them under running water helps remove surface residues, but additional methods can enhance safety. One effective technique is soaking produce in a vinegar-water solution (one teaspoon of white vinegar per bowl of water) for 20 minutes before rinsing thoroughly. Alternatively, scrubbing with baking soda or using salt water can help remove chemicals. Peeling certain fruits and vegetables also reduces exposure. Adopting these simple practices ensures cleaner, safer food, reducing the risk of consuming harmful residues while maintaining nutritional benefits.

Reduce Exposure to Environmental Carcinogens

Air pollution, contaminated water, and exposure to industrial chemicals are significant concerns in Bangladesh. While individual control over environmental factors may be limited, small steps can help. Use water filters to ensure safe drinking water, avoid burning waste, and advocate for cleaner industrial practices. Supporting policies that reduce pollution can also have a long-term impact on public health.

Regular Health Check-ups and Screenings

Early detection saves lives. Regular health check-ups and cancer screenings can identify precancerous conditions or cancer at an early stage when treatment is most effective. Women should undergo regular Pap smears for cervical cancer and mammograms for breast cancer, while men should be aware of prostate cancer risks. Consult your healthcare provider to determine the appropriate screening schedule based on your age and family history.

Promote Mental and Emotional Well-being

Chronic stress and poor mental health can weaken the immune system, potentially increasing cancer risk. Practice stress management techniques such as prayer, meditation, yoga, or spending time with loved ones. Building a strong support system and seeking professional help when needed can improve overall well-being.

Cancer prevention begins with awareness and action. However, for those already battling cancer, timely diagnosis, treatment, and emotional support are just as crucial. The new World Cancer Day theme 2025-2027, "United by Unique," places people at the centre of care and their stories at the heart of the conversation. This reminds us that cancer prevention and treatment must be approached with both science and empathy. Together, through awareness and collective action, we can create a healthier, cancer-free future.

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