

AN OUNCE OF PREVENTION IS WORTH A POUND OF CURE



By Kelly L. Fraga

As one of our local celebrities remarked long ago, an ounce

of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Of course, Benjamin Franklin was referring to preventing fires, but, as with many of his sayings, the underlying wisdom made this part of our everyday language. His expression means that, when dealing with a problem, spending a small amount of time and effort early on is a good investment! The same can be said for our health and for the health of our planet.

Did you know that the National Cancer Institute's program on childhood cancer spends only about 1% of its budget on preventing childhood cancer? We're focused so heavily on spending our money for new and expensive drugs, genetics,

and other treatments that we aren't giving enough consideration to the things we could do to prevent disease.

There are many risk factors for developing cancer and other diseases, including age, family history, viruses, bacteria, and, of course, our lifestyles, as well as contact with harmful substances. But, when you realize that over 50,000 chemicals are in commerce today (and new ones developed every year), you know they are having an impact on our lives and our environment. These chemicals are found in everyday items such as foods, personal care products, packaging, prescription drugs, and household and lawn-care products.

Exposure to chemicals in the outdoors, at home, and at work may add to the risk of getting cancer and other autoimmune-based diseases. In fact, much of what we know about chemicals causing cancer we have learned from workers exposed on the job, such as farmers, factory workers, and transportation workers.

When you're exposed is also important. A small exposure in the womb, for example, may be far more serious than a small exposure as an adult. The genes that you inherit from your parents also play a role. DDT, which was banned in the 1970s, continues to be detected in the environment and our food supply, in breast

milk and the fatty tissue of animals and humans. Unfortunately, chemicals linger in our environment and in our bodies!

Today, there are things everyone can do to help prevent cancer, like eating a healthy diet, exercising, getting annual wellness checks, avoiding tobacco and alcohol, **reading labels**, and using safe, effective products to clean your home and for personal care. Avoiding exposure to harmful chemicals whenever we can, especially for pregnant women, babies, and children, is important, preventative, and proactive! Small changes add up to BIG impact! When you know better, you do better!

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