

# Can cancer be prevented?

submitted by Gail Shaw Wright, MD, FACP, FCCP

## Florida Cancer Institute

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**C**ancer is now the leading cause of death in most age groups, and people are beginning to recognize the importance of making lifestyle changes that can reduce the risk of this disease. Here are some considerations.

### Smoking Cessation

Studies show that while the risk for lung cancer never reduces to the level enjoyed by a life-long non-smoker, it does diminish more the longer a patient remains smoke-free.

### Dietary Prevention

Diets rich in fruits and vegetables are shown to result in lower risks for developing certain types of cancer. Dietary changes, to be successful, need to begin early and continue for a lifetime.

Some studies have found a protective effect of dietary fiber against colon cancer that increases with intake, but one study, after 16 years of follow-up, showed no association between fiber intake and the risk of colorectal cancer or adenoma.

Healthy behavior modifications such as consuming a low fat diet, minimizing alcohol

intake and increasing exercise may lower breast and possibly other cancer risks.

### Beware of Antioxidants

It has been hypothesized that antioxidant vitamins might be associated with lower lung cancer risks, but one study indicates that benefits attributed to antioxidant vitamins may actually be due to a protective mechanism in the fruits and vegetables carrying the antioxidant. The study also indicated a *higher* incidence of lung cancer among trial participants who took beta-carotene.

Another trial of patients with a history of colorectal adenoma showed no evidence that any of the antioxidant vitamin groups caused a reduction in the adenomas, and the Physicians' Health Study showed no benefit or harm among the 11,036 physicians randomized to receive beta carotene compared to the 11,035 receiving placebo in overall cancer incidence, lung cancer incidence, or overall mortality.

### Aspirin

Aspirin and other non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) decrease the incidence of carcinogen-induced colon tumors in rodents, and studies have shown that NSAIDs protect against colorectal cancer in humans. However, any benefit must be balanced against the potential side effects of the long-term use of these agents, including gastric irritation and platelet dysfunction.

### Folate

Several epidemiological studies have found lower incidence of colorectal cancer among those with the highest dietary folate intake. However, this reduction in risk became statistically significant only after 15 years of use.

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**ONLY THE BEST** for the residents of West Pasco County. Florida Cancer Institute's brand new 22,000 square-foot facility in New Port Richey.

### Calcium

Calcium may inhibit the development of colon cancer. Most case-control and cohort studies in humans show decreased colon cancer risk with high-calcium diets or supplementation, but these have rarely achieved statistical significance.

### Hormone Replacement Therapy

The Cancer Prevention Study II found a 29% reduction in mortality from colon cancer with hormone replacement therapy. This protective benefit was also seen in the Nurses' Health Study with a 35% reduction in colon cancer risk, but the benefit disappeared within five years after cessation of therapy.

### Tamoxifen

In the Breast Cancer Prevention Trial (P1) sponsored by the National Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project (NSABP), tamoxifen therapy for five years in women at high risk for breast cancer decreased the risk of both invasive and noninvasive breast cancer. However, many physicians feel that the risks associated with tamoxifen among women who may never develop breast disease are not justified by the statistical benefits.

FHCN—Billie S. Noakes



## Newest technology in cancer care, close to home

**F**lorida Cancer Institute has been providing radiotherapy and chemotherapy to patients in West Pasco County since 1978," relates Director of Radiation Services Larry Bruchell. "For nearly thirty years, our ten thousand square-foot facility provided many patients with needed services, but now we can offer even more."

On March 30, Florida Cancer Institute officially opened its new state-of-the-art cancer center in New Port Richey, combining the latest technology in cancer care with the warmth and comfort patients have grown to expect from their hometown cancer center.

Any cancer patient knows that the schedule for treating cancer can be very arduous. In addition, most treatments for cancer have fatigue as a side effect. While this fatigue is usually manageable, easy access to treatment in a warm, personable environment helps make the process easier on patients and their loved ones.

The new facility, located in New Port Richey, is located close to the hospital, at 8763 River Crossing Boulevard. It is an expansive 22,000 square-foot facility with ample room for leading edge technologies like diagnostic Computed Tomography (CT), positron emission tomography (PET), chemotherapy and radiation therapy, including intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT) — all in one location.

"Our CT scanner is one of only three of its kind in the state of Florida," notes Mr. Bruchell, "and one of the others is in our center in Spring Hill."

The scanner features advanced features that allow diagnostic data to be transmitted digitally to work stations, where visualization and treatment planning for medications, 3-D conformal radiation and IMRT can take place.

Comfortable recliners are also in place to accommodate patients requiring infusion therapies.

"With the exception of surgery," says Mr. Bruchell, "there is no aspect of cancer treatment that can not be delivered to our patients in this full-service, state-of-the-art cancer center."



**Gail Shaw Wright, MD, FACP, FCCP**, is Board Certified in Internal Medicine and Medical Oncology. She completed her undergraduate studies, graduating with Highest Honors from the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill, where she also earned her Medical Degree and served her internship. She completed her Internal Medicine Residency at Duke University Medical Center, Durham, NC, and completed subspecialty Fellowship training in Oncology at the National Cancer Institute in Bethesda, MD. Dr. Wright has served as Program Leader for Cancer Prevention and Cancer Screening at the H. Lee Moffitt Cancer Center and Research Institute in Tampa, FL, where she was also a member of the Thoracic Oncology Program.

## Your hometown team...

The oncologists at Florida Cancer Institute welcome questions regarding the newest advances in cancer care. For further information, call the Institute, located at 8763 River Crossing Blvd. in New Port Richey, (727) 842-8411; or the Institute, located at 13906 Lakeshore Blvd., Suite 330, in Hudson, (727) 863-8563. You may fax questions to (727) 847-2923.