

# The Power of the “Helpers” in Cancer Prevention

WRITTEN BY: DR. WENDY ROGERS

Let's face it, the middle of April was a rough one. At times it was difficult to remember the positive in this world we live in. One of my favorite things I saw during that time was a quote by the famous Mr. Rogers, (of no relation by the way). He said, “When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, ‘Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.’” Today, I'm going to address a difficult topic but am hoping it will actually bring a little hope, optimism, and empowerment rather than be another story of fear and sadness. This is a story of the “helpers” and how to help yourself.

About 5 years ago, a dear friend only a couple of years older than myself, was diagnosed with breast cancer before she had even turned forty. About a year ago, my cousin was diagnosed with breast cancer. I've lost two uncles and a grandfather to the disease. Per the American Cancer Society, the estimated number of newly diagnosed cancer cases in Oregon for 2013 is 21,720 with the highest numbers found in breast, lung, and prostate cancers. Most of us have had our lives impacted by cancer in some way. There are many survivors but sadly there are many more lives that are taken by this disease in which our own cells seem to betray us.

There are many possible reasons why cancer is able to take control and do what it does. We

know it begins with damage to our cells but then the process gets much more complicated from there. \*We have learned a lot about this disease over the years but there is still much more to learn and try to understand. With that said, here's what we know for sure: it's not a party to treat cancer and there are no guarantees. Whenever possible, we want to do everything we can to prevent it. There are some fairly simple things we can all do that decreases our risk by a tremendous amount, thus helping and empowering ourselves in the fight against cancer.



Let's start with the old adage, “You are what you eat”. When it comes to cancer prevention, there are no truer words. Recent research is showing that the quality of the environment around a cell plays a huge role in the chances of that cell becoming cancerous or not. Your food choices create your cell environment,

the foundation of your overall health and your chances of developing cancer. Foods high in processed sugar and trans-fats create inflammation in the body which in turn increases the possibility for cell damage to occur. Sugar also suppresses our immune system which when healthy is working to destroy damaged cells before they have a chance to take hold as cancer. We also need to consider the chemicals, pesticides and unwanted hormones that may be present in our food. There is plenty of research showing the increase in cancer potential with all of the above. So what do you do? To make healthy dietary choices you keep it simple! Eat whole foods the majority of the time. Utilize resources like [EWG.org](http://EWG.org) to find out which foods to avoid because of their pesticide levels if you are unable to get them organic. Make sure when consuming meat and dairy, that your sources are hormone-free, organic and preferably free-range.

Next on the list is exercise. Yup! I just said exercise can help prevent cancer. Several research studies have shown 30 minutes of moderately intense exercise 5 days a week can improve your immune system, enhance your antioxidant defense, increase DNA repair, and encourages normal cell death which all play important roles in keeping the ugly “C” away. Exercise also decreases risk of recurrence when cancer has developed. This means it truly is never too late to start exercising.

After exercise comes sleep. It seems silly to say but it is crucial for us to get a good

night's sleep on a regular basis. Too often we think its ok to burn the midnight oil and we'll catch up eventually. Well there is no “catching up” when it comes to sleep. At night when we are sleeping we produce a hormone called melatonin. Melatonin is a potent antioxidant, helping to prevent DNA damage along with inhibiting cancer development and growth. Without sleep in a darkened room this critical hormone isn't produced.

There are many nutrients and vitamins that also help decrease our risk such as fish oil, Vitamin D, and green tea to name a few. But without quality sleep, diet and exercise those other things are only fighting an uphill battle. I feel compelled to add the caveat that there is always the rare exception of someone who did everything right and still developed the disease. It's important to remember those individuals are the exception, not the majority. Hopefully I have left you with a little hope and optimism, that with some fairly simple changes, you can make a dramatic difference in your life and feel better along the way.

For further assistance in becoming your own helper and reducing your cancer risks, contact the doctors at True Health Medicine, PC.



**Dr. Wendy Rogers** is a naturopathic physician and acupuncturist with a family practice in Tualatin at True Health Medicine, PC. The clinic is located at 8555 SW Tualatin Rd, 503-691-0901.