Twelve ways to reduce your cancer risk
Update of the European Code against Cancer
Carolina Espina, PhD, IARC
1. Background and rationale

2. Methodology

3. Dissemination
At least 1/3 of all cancers are preventable

Mortality can be further reduced by early detection (screening)
WHAT?
- Key prevention tool
- Concrete, science-based guidelines
- At least 1/3 of cancers are preventable

WHY?
- Science is dynamic
- Improvement in communication to the general population

HOW?
- Update (recent scientific data)
  1. Confirm existing recommendations
  2. Potential additional ones
  3. Interventions

WHO?
- Supported by the European Commission
- Led by the IARC
1. Background and rationale

2. Methodology
   2.1 Update of the scientific evidence
   2.2 Communicating to the individual

3. Dissemination
Update of the European Code against Cancer

1. Update of scientific evidence: revisit existing recommendations and potentially adding new ones

2. Focus on a specific target group: the European individual

3. Present each message in a manner that promotes effective public communication

NEW!

- Explanations and additional guidance as public health messages (Q&A)
- Recommendations on how to implement individual interventions
What can I do to reduce my risk of cancer?
New structure and outcomes

- Science base
- Code
- 12 ways
- Questions & Answers
Level I: Code

General public

12 evidence-based recommendations on primary and secondary prevention of cancer

Level II: Questions and Answers (Q&A)

General public

- Additional information on the recommendations or on cancer prevention topics not covered by the recommendations
- Q&A on exposure, messages for special target groups, and information on preventive actions on how to achieve the recommendation

Level III: Scientific Justification

Scientists

- Justification of each recommendation and the scientific statements made in Q&A
- Peer-reviewed publications (open access)
12 ways to reduce your cancer risk

- Tobacco
- Second-hand smoke
- Healthy body weight
- Physical activity
- Diet
- Alcohol
- Sun / UV
- Occupational chemicals
- Radon
- Breastfeeding
- Hormonal therapy
- Vaccination
- Screening

http://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr/
1. Do not smoke.
   Do not use any form of tobacco.

2. Make your home smoke free. Support smoke-free policies in your workplace.
3 Take action to be a healthy body weight.

4 Be physically active in everyday life. Limit the time you spend sitting.

5 Have a healthy diet:
   • Eat plenty of whole grains, pulses, vegetables and fruits.
   • Limit high-calorie foods (foods high in sugar or fat) and avoid sugary drinks
   • Avoid processed meat; limit red meat and foods high in salt.
6 If you drink alcohol of any type, limit your intake. Not drinking alcohol is better for cancer prevention.

7 Avoid too much sun, especially for children. Use sun protection. Do not use sunbeds.

8 In the workplace, protect yourself against cancer-causing substances by following health and safety instructions.
9. Find out if you are exposed to radiation from naturally high radon levels in your home. Take action to reduce high radon levels.

10. For women:
   - Breastfeeding reduces the mother’s cancer risk. If you can, breastfeed your baby.
   - Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) increases the risk of certain cancers. Limit use of HRT.
11 Ensure your children take part in vaccination programmes for:

- Hepatitis B (for newborns)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV) (for girls).

12 Take part in organized cancer screening programmes for:

- Bowel cancer (men and women)
- Breast cancer (women)
- Cervical cancer (women).

The European Code Against Cancer focuses on actions that individual citizens can take to help prevent cancer. Successful cancer prevention requires these individual actions to be supported by governmental policies and actions.

Find out more about the European Code Against Cancer at: http://cancer-code-europe.iarc.fr
1. Background and rationale

2. Methodology

3. Dissemination

3.1 Launch of the 4th edition of the European Code against Cancer

3.2 Ad-hoc website
1. Do not smoke. Do not use any form of tobacco.

2. Make your home smoke-free. Support smoke-free policies in your workplace.

3. Take action to be a healthy body weight.

4. Be physically active in everyday life. Limit the time you spend sitting.

5. Have a healthy diet:
   - Eat plenty of whole grains, pulses, vegetables and fruits.
   - Limit high-calorie foods (foods high in sugar or fat) and avoid sugary drinks.
   - Avoid processed meat; limit red meat and foods high in saturated fats.


7. Avoid too much sun, especially for children. Use sun protection.

8. In the workplace, protect yourself against cancer-causing substances and radiation.

9. Find out if you are exposed to radiation from naturally high radon levels. Take action to reduce high radon levels.

10. For women:
    - Breastfeeding reduces the mother’s cancer risk. If you can, breastfeeding is best.
    - Hormone replacement therapy (HRT) increases the risk of breast cancer. Limit use of HRT.

11. Ensure your children take part in vaccination programmes for:
    - Hepatitis B (for newborns)
    - Human papillomavirus (HPV) (for girls).

12. Take part in organised cancer screening programmes for:
    - Bowel cancer (men and women)
    - Breast cancer (women)
    - Cervical cancer (women).

The European Code Against Cancer focuses on actions that individuals and societies can take to reduce their risk of cancer. Successful cancer prevention requires a combination of individual actions to be suppressed, combined with efforts to reduce exposure to cancer-causing substances and radiation. These recommendations are a result of a project coordinated by the International Agency for Research on Cancer and financed by the European Union.
Level II Questions & Answers

Tobacco

Do not smoke. Do not use any form of tobacco.

Tobacco is the leading global cause of preventable illness and death. Tobacco is the major cause of cancer. Smoking is the most harmful form of tobacco use, including the increased risk of tobacco-related illness. Cigarette smoking kills up to half of long-term users.

Each year, tobacco use causes about 6 million deaths and more than half a billion dollars of economic damage worldwide. Tobacco will kill as many as 5 billion people this century if the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is not implemented rapidly. In Europe, the recently revised Tobacco Products Directive (2014/40/EU) specifies the rules controlling the production, presentation, and sales of tobacco and related products, intended to harmonize differences among countries in matters of tobacco control and thus better safeguarding the public health of the population.

An overview of the damaging effects to health caused by tobacco exposure is shown in Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Health consequences causally linked to tobacco use and exposure to second-hand smoke.

- **Smoking**
  - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)
  - Heart disease
  - Cancer
- **Second-hand smoke exposure**
  - Chronic lower respiratory disease
  - Acute lower respiratory infection

Source: Adapted from The Health Consequences of Smoking — 50 Years of Progress: A Report of the Surgeon General, Atlanta, GA: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health, 2014, with permission from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

What types of tobacco products are used in Europe?

Does tobacco use cause cancer? What percentage of cancer is caused by smoking?

Do all forms of tobacco cause cancer?
Can I reduce my risk of developing cancer or dying of cancer if I quit smoking?

Yes. The scientific evidence conclusively shows that the risk of cancer decreases after quitting smoking at any age, but the younger the age when stopping, the greater the benefit.

On average, smokers lose at least 10 years of life compared with those who have never smoked. Quitting smoking before the age of 40 years reduces the risk of a smoking-related death by about 90%. It is never too late to stop smoking; quitting at any age lowers the risk of smoking-related death compared with those who continue to smoke.

Quitting smoking also has other health benefits that you can see immediately (see Figure 5).

What smokers can do to quit is described here [hyperlink to Q&A 9].

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Level III Scientific papers supporting the Code

Scientific Justification

The European Code Against Cancer and the answers to the Questions and Answers were developed based on scientific evidence. You can find below the different manuscripts that explain this evidence.

The manuscripts will be uploaded here as soon as published.
The Code does not aim to replace existing efforts to promote cancer prevention.

It aims to strengthen cancer prevention by:

- Encouraging the general public to react more positively when receiving similar messages
- Focusing on the key prevention messages relevant to most people
European Code Against Cancer - Acknowledgements

Scientific Committee
Filippo Belardelli
Douglas Bettcher
Franco Cavalli
Gauden Galea
Gilbert Lenoir
Jose Martin-Moreno
Florian Alexandru Nicula
Jørgen Olsen
Julietta Patnick
Maja Primic-Žakelj
Pekka Puska
Flora van Leeuwen
Otmar Wiestler
Witold Zatonski

Scientific Secretariat (IARC)
Joachim Schüz
Lawrence von Karsa
Nereo Segnan
Carolina Espina
Patricia Villain
Tracy Lignini

Working Group Experts

Tobacco and second-hand smoke
Maria Leon Roux (Chair)
Neela Guha
Eva Kralikova
Anne McNeill,
Silvia Minozzi
Armando Peruga
Joachim Schüz
Carolina Espina

Physical Activity, body weight, diet, alcohol and breastfeeding
Isabelle Romieu (co-Chair)
Martin Wiseman (co-Chair)
Annie Anderson
Paola Armaroli
Franco Berrino
Marie-Christine Boutron-Ruault
Michele Cecchini
Tim Key
Michael Leitzmann
Teresa Norat
Hilary J Powers
Chiara Scoccianti
Joachim Schüz
Lawrence von Karsa
Carolina Espina

Infections and vaccination
Rolando Herrero (Chair)
Maribel Almonte
Ahti Anttila
Joakim Dillner
Silvia Franceschi
Paula Gonzalez
Andrew Hall
Lawrence von Karsa
Patricia Villain

Radiation
Joachim Schüz (Chair)
Anssi Auvinen
Esther de Vries
Friederike Erdmann
Rüdiger Greinert
John Harrison
Ausrele Kesminiene
Neil McColl
Carolina Espina

Screening
Nereo Segnan (Chair)
Ahti Anttila
Wendy Atkin
Peter B. Dean
Harry de Koning
Lena Dillner
Rolando Herrero
Ernst Kuipers
Iris Lansdorp-Vogelaar
Eugenio Paci
Jaroslaw Regula
Eero Suonio
Sven Törnberg
Lawrence von Karsa
Patricia Villain

Environment, occupation and pharmaceutical drugs
Joachim Schüz (Chair)
Kurt Straif
Harri Vainio
Carolina Espina

Working Group Experts (continued)
Manolis Kogevinas
Rodolfo Saracci
Søren Friis

Literature group
Silvia Minozzi (Chair)
Paola Armaroli
Cristina Bellisario
Elena Biagioli
Michela Cinquini
Silvia Gianola
Marien Gonzalez Lorenzo
Tracy Lignini
Teresa Norat
Nereo Segnan
Eero Suonio
Lawrence von Karsa
Joachim Schüz
Carolina Espina
Patricia Villain

Communication group
Jane Wardle (Chair)
Lynn Faulds Wood
Nicolas Gaudin
Kirstin Grosse Frie
Eric Lucas
Veronique Terrasse
Maria Valdivieso Gonzalez
Kelly Winstanley
Martin Wiseman
Lawrence von Karsa
Joachim Schüz
Carolina Espina
Patricia Villain

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