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Use Your New Year's Resolutions to Prevent Cancer

More Than Half of All Cancers can be Prevented by Daily Lifestyle Choices

(Alexandria, VA) – Nearly half of all Americans make New Year's resolutions, most of them health-related. Stop smoking. Start exercising. Lose weight. Eat better. Unfortunately, only 10 to 15 percent of these resolutions are ever kept. Even more unfortunate is that these are exactly the things that can help everyone prevent cancer.

John C. Ruckdeschel, M.D., a Medical Advisory Board member for the **Prevent Cancer Foundation** and the president and CEO of the Karmanos Cancer Institute in Detroit, is adamant about smoking's negative health effects. "The major thing to avoid cancer is to stop smoking," he says. "If there's anything we have clear-cut, indisputable evidence for, it's that."

What's more is that tobacco's harm can't be counter-balanced by doing everything else right. "Eating broccoli all the time is not going to reverse what smoking does," he says. "You have to cut it out of your life."

Ruckdeschel explains that cancer itself is not some outside agent that attacks the body. It is a harmful change within the body, on the cellular level, that is caused by our genetic makeup combined with what we either do or don't do every day to cause these cellular changes to occur. Mutated cells begin replicating and taking over precious internal real estate, forcing out the healthy cells.

Contrary to popular belief, most cancerous tendencies are not determined by heredity, but are instead shifted into gear by what we do on a daily basis – what we eat and drink, if we exercise, and a host of other lifestyle choices. *It is estimated that more than half of all cancers could be prevented if we just took better care of ourselves.*

In addition to smoking, one dangerous pitfall is over-consuming foods that are high in calories but low in nutrition, forcing the body to struggle while processing large amounts of calories with no additional physical activity.

"The overweight and obesity problems we're seeing in our population are outgrowths of the sedentary lifestyle," says **David Schottenfeld, M.D., M.Sc.**, also a member of the Prevent

Cancer Foundation's Medical Advisory Board, as well as a professor of epidemiology and internal medicine at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health. "We need to recognize that as we look at the body weight issue, it causes or influences one-quarter to one-third of the total cancer incidence."

With over-processed foods and sugary drinks, not only does the body not get the vitamins it needs, it's left with thousands of extra calories to try to dispose of. But without an extra amount of physical activity to burn those calories off, they turn instead to fat. And carrying extra pounds, especially around the waist, also puts someone at a higher risk for cancer.

To do your part to prevent cancer, set a realistic goal for 2008, such as:

- Stop smoking – Even if you don't succeed on the first – or tenth – try, you owe it to yourself and those who love you to keep on trying. And don't be afraid to ask for help. Studies show addiction to nicotine is stronger than that of cocaine.
- Be more active – If you've got an exercise plan, great! Keep it going and vary your routine to stay interested. But if you haven't seen your running shoes since high school, it's time to get your feet in gear. Start small – an afternoon stroll around the block, jogging a minute or two every so often while walking your dog – and build from there.
- Lose weight – Exercising will certainly help, but make it easier for your body to drop excess pounds by *not* giving it what it *doesn't* need. Read food labels and watch portion size. Keep saturated fats and sugars to a minimum.
- Eat better – It may have seemed funny to hide your veggies under your plate when you were a kid, but now, your body's not laughing when you don't get the right nutrition. Make it a point to include fresh produce in your diet – put an apple in your lunch bag, snack on some berries during the day, sauté some spinach for dinner. It all adds up and your body will thank you for it.
- See your doctor – Doing all the above steps will put you on the right track, but you still need to see your health professional to be screened for cancer. That means a mammogram every year for women 40 and over, a colonoscopy for men and women every 10 years starting at age 50, a Pap test for women every year beginning at 21, and regular skin checks and physical exams to be sure you're in tip-top shape.

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Editor's Notes:

To schedule an interview with Dr. Ruckdeshel or Dr. Schottenfeld, please call Valerie Lambros at 703-519-2116, or email Valerie.lambros@preventcancer.org.

For more information on prevention and specific preventable cancers, visit:
www.preventcancer.org.

About Prevent Cancer Foundation

The Prevent Cancer Foundation (formerly the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation) was started in 1985 when Founder and President Carolyn Aldigé first understood the power of prevention to defeat cancer – and recognized that too few of the country's resources were used to promote cancer prevention research or education. Today, it is one of the nation's leading health organizations and has catapulted cancer prevention to prominence.

Since its inception the Foundation has provided more than \$97 million in support of cancer prevention and early detection research and education programs. The Foundation's peer-reviewed grants have been awarded to more than 300 scientists from more than

150 of the leading academic medical centers nationwide. This research has been pivotal in developing a body of knowledge that is the basis for important cancer prevention and early detection strategies. For more information, please visit www.preventcancer.org.