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Health Matters: Kicking Cancer Deaths

Triston Sanders - Medical Anchor

According to a study from the Center for Disease Control, 6.8 million more Americans are surviving cancer today as compared to just 30 years ago. People are realizing that they may have cancer, but cancer doesn't have to have them.

In this Health Matters, we'll look at how the trend to survive this disease can continue if we follow some basic steps.

Patsy Kitchens has been a breast cancer survivor for almost nine years now and she believes attitude is everything as she has learned to be positive even during her chemotherapy treatments.

Patsy says, "I didn't mind being bald. I went around bald. I didn't have to shave my legs for two years, it was great."

Society's philosophy about cancer may be another reason more people are surviving the disease. It is no longer thought of as a death sentence.

"Cancer is just a word, it's not a sentence, and reoccurrence it is just a word."

The key to beating cancer first lies in prevention and early detection. Take care of your body and avoid risk factors like smoking and report any concerns to your physician.

Dr. Eric Rost, oncologist, says, "If we find cancers earlier, they're much easier to treat and much more curable."

According to your age and family history, your doctor can tell you what cancer screening tests you should have done. Patsy eventually became a cancer support group leader and she says cancer has actually taught her to live her life more positively.

"I appreciate every minute of every day," she says.

Early prevention through education and maintaining a healthy lifestyle are all highly beneficial to beating cancer and are things that we can do ourselves.

For more information on beating cancer or support groups in your local area, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

Facts from the American Cancer Society:

1. The percentage of people in the entire population who die of any type of cancer, the death rate, has been decreasing since the early 1990s.
2. Survival rates: the percentage of people who get cancer and survive at least five years have also improved substantially for most of the top 15 cancer sites in men and women.
3. In 2001, 9.8 million Americans were cancer survivors, the report said, while in 1971 just three million people fell into that category.

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