

Beating Cancer

Those who stop fearing the disease are usually the ones who overcome it.

Question: Cancer runs in my family. Can I lower my own risk of getting it?

M.S., Edgewood, Florida

Answer: I will begin my answer with a resounding yes! You absolutely can lower your probability of a cancer diagnosis. The best approach you can take is to implement a proactive lifestyle that promotes good health in your body, mind and spirit.

Body Since 1938, every president of the United States has recognized April as Cancer Control Month. Last year, I had the honor of receiving an original printing of President George W. Bush's proclamation for the observance. In it, he had included some of the most important things a person can do to avoid cancer.

President Bush got it right when he stated: "Improvements in diet and fitness can help prevent many serious health problems. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables and regular physical activity help protect us from illness and can add years to our lives. Research suggests that we can decrease the number of cancer deaths in America by one-third simply by changing our diets and getting more exercise."

Mind Use your mind. You already know you shouldn't eat fast foods, smoke or continue in unhealthy habits. But do you also know you can develop thinking habits that actually promote health?

The Bible states that a man is as he thinks in his heart (see Prov. 23:7). During my 20 years of medical practice I have seen that people who are convinced they will get cancer have a

higher tendency to get it than those who don't worry about it.

Why is this? It's because a direct link exists between the immune system and the emotions. Fear and anxiety provoke the release of immune-suppressing hormones. A lowered immune system offers cancer the opportunity to progress.

Spirit: Faith in God demolishes fear within man. Numerous clinical trials from Duke University confirm that those who have religious faith recover more quickly and with fewer complications than those who have no faith.

I've found with my own cancer patients that those who stop fearing the disease are usually the ones who overcome it. In almost every case, those who have peace are the ones who know their futures are secure in Jesus Christ.

In every book I have written about cancer I have stated that fear is cancer's stronghold. The good news is you can live without this fear.

Practice healthful living, do not worry about illness and have faith that God is taking care of you.

Question: Does medical science recognize prayer as having a health benefit?

E.H., East Point, Georgia

Answer: An interesting article titled "Systematic Review of Clinical Trials Examining the Effects of Religion on Health" published in the Southern Medical Journal (December 2002) details a study in which a comprehensive review of hundreds of randomized controlled trials (RCTs) were used to determine the effect of prayer on health.

The research concluded that "RCTs support the thesis that Christian intercessory prayer improves health outcomes in patients admitted to a CCU [cardiac care unit] and may improve survival in children with leukemia" (emphasis added).

Simply stated—yes, prayer has medicinal value. The intrinsic health benefit of prayer is that it is an effective relaxation technique that can alleviate stress and bolster the immune system.

Yet more important than the natural healing power of prayer is praying in the name of Jesus. Praying in faith and in the name of Jesus connects us with God our Father. Miraculous healings do not come from prayer; they come from the Father through His Son Jesus Christ.

I am very committed to prayer in my medical practice because we doctors have limited abilities to heal. God, however, has no limitations or boundaries.

As I have lectured around the world, I have encouraged doctors to pray. I am looking forward to taking part in the next Worldwide Cancer Prayer Day on June 5. The world, and that includes the medical world, needs to know that prayer is our first line of defense, not our last resort.

Francisco Contreras, M.D., oversees Oasis of Hope Hospital (), a cancer-care facility in Mexico known widely for its alternative-treatment methods. He is the author of several books on health, including his newest, *The Coming Cancer Cure* (Siloam,).