Cancer affects millions of people throughout the world, and is the 2nd leading cause of death in the United States. Research continues to be done in order to help us better understand the disease itself. The goal of developing safer, more effective treatments and eventually discovering a cure is highly sought after. But until a cure is found one of the most effective methods of managing cancer is to prevent it.

There are three different types of prevention: primary, secondary and tertiary. Primary prevention efforts seek to stop the disease from occurring. A good example of this would be using sunscreen to prevent skin cancer. Secondary prevention identifies or detects a disease through some type of screening before it causes any symptoms. Many preventative efforts for cancer rely on this method. Finally, tertiary prevention occurs when the person has symptoms of the disease and aims to stop its progression while adequately treating any symptoms the disease may cause.

All of these methods are essential in the management of cancer. Some important primary prevention measures, like quitting smoking, eating healthy and exercising, can help decrease your risks for many different types of cancers. But because not all types of cancer are preventable, even with a healthy lifestyle, frequent and early detection is very important. Listed below are different primary and secondary prevention measures recommended by the American Cancer Society for several common types of cancer.

**Breast Cancer:**
- Women over 40 should get mammograms and have clinical breast exams once a year
- Women age 20-30 should have clinical breast exams once every 2-3 years
- All women over age 20 should perform self breast exams regularly

**Cervical Cancer:**
- Women should begin receiving yearly pap smears within 3 years of having sexual intercourse or by age 21, whichever occurs first
- The use of vaccines (Gardasil® or Cervarix®) against some strains of Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) can prevent the development of cervical cancer and should be given to girls age 11-18

**Skin Cancer:**
- Protect your skin from burning by wearing sunscreen and clothing outside
- You and your doctor should check your skin regularly to watch for suspicious or changing

**Colorectal Cancer:**
- Beginning at age 50, most men and women should undergo screening for colorectal cancer and polyps
- There are many options, as discussed in previous newsletter articles, including flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years or a colonoscopy every 10 years

**Prostate Cancer:**
- Men should begin talking with their doctor about whether testing for prostate cancer is right for them around age 50
- Some men may need to start testing earlier, such as those with a close family relative (father or brother) with prostate cancer prior to age 65 and African Americans. These men should talk to their doctors at age 45.
- If testing is done a blood test called a Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) level will be drawn and a digital rectal exam may or may not be performed

If you have any questions about the information listed above or if you would like to know whether these methods of screening and prevention are right for you, please talk to your doctor or pharmacist!