

Q/

Will garlic make me immune to cancer?

ASK THE DOCTOR

You asked and **Dr Vincent Karuhanga** is here to respond to all your health queries

Today people are suffering a lot from cancer. Why do you think so? Is it in the food? Can I take garlic to stop cancer?

-John Paul Balaaga Kamuli

Send your questions to features@ug.nationmedia.com

Dear John: It is true people are more aware of cancer today and this may be one reason why we feel it is not charms but rampant cancer leading to health issues. Also the mere increase in population means there will be more people with cancer. That said, there may be other factors leading to increased numbers of cancer sufferers.

Gene changes leading to cancer may accumulate as we grow older risking cancer more. Today, many people, especially in the western world, are living longer. Insults on the body due to our habits such as smoking, drug abuse, obesity, nutritional habits and use of chemicals on our skin or contaminating our food are all on the rise risking cancer. Some cancers are related to infections with the newer viruses such as HIV. Unprotected oral or anal sex is also putting people at risk of cancers (throat, anal, penile).

Our diet influences our risk of many cancers, including cancers of the bowel, (fast foods), stomach, (salted and smoked foods) mouth, (heat, alcohols such as crude gin) and liver (alcohol, groundnuts with a fungus). By eating a healthy, balanced diet that is high in fibre, fruit and vegetables, and low in red and processed meat and saturated fat can reduce the cancer risk. Protected sex and minimising sexual partners can also help.

Certain nutrients in vegetables and fruits protect against damage to tissues that occurs constantly as a result of normal metabolism (oxidation). Garlic, among others, has been much talked about as protector against cancer because of its antioxidant properties and fibre.

CANCER CELLS

Multiplication. The body's basic unit is called a cell. Cancer occurs when cells become abnormal and divide without control. To be healthy, cells divide to produce more cells only when the body needs them. If cells keep dividing when new cells are not needed, a mass of tissue (tumour, benign or cancerous) forms.



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