



Fire Fighter Cancer Awareness and Prevention



TRAINING BRIEF

Modifiable Risk Factors

DISCUSSION

Modifiable risk factors are behaviors and exposures that can raise or lower a person's risk of cancer. They are modifiable because they can, in theory, be changed. Here are some examples:

- If you use tobacco products, stop.
- Exercise
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Eat less red meat, fried and fatty foods. Avoid calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods and exercise portion control.
- Use sunscreen whenever out in the sun.
- Reduce alcohol consumption.

To reduce modifiable risk factors, a wellness/fitness program should be implemented. As part of the wellness program, you should also focus on:

- Fitness
- Behavioral/mental health
- Medical evaluations
- Modifiable risk factors
- Sleep hygiene

Medical Evaluations:

Early diagnosis is key to create the best chance for optimal outcomes and treatment strategies for cardiac and cancer related health issues. A physical fitness evaluation should address the following key points:

- Annual physical exams for early detection of potential illnesses.
- If members are utilizing their personal physicians for annual checkups, please refer to the updated recommendations for annual physicals for the high-risk employee:

o <http://www.fstaresearch.org/resource/?FstarId=11591>

o <https://www.safetystanddown.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/FCSN-Letter-to-Primary-Care-Provider.pdf>

Modifiable Risk Factors:

The following examples are modifiable factors that can influence cancer risk:

- The use of tobacco products
- Exposure to sunlight (sunscreen use)
- Weight management
- Alcohol consumption (alcohol consumption leads to an increased cancer risk)

Sleep Hygiene:

Shift workers face particular challenges related to sleep. When workers start shift work, it is not uncommon for them to have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep and they often find themselves tired even after 7-8 hours of sleep. If this trend continues for several weeks, it can be considered "Shift Work Disorder."

It is important for firefighters to get as much good sleep as they can when they can get it. Typical sleep hygiene habits, like going to sleep as close to the same time as possible each night, keeping your sleeping area quiet and dark, and ensuring exposure to natural light during the day are even more important for firefighters.