

# CANCER BASICS

## A few things to know



We all know someone with cancer, but we don't all know the facts. It is a fact that cancer survival rates are improving for many types of cancers.<sup>1</sup> So it's important to know the signs and symptoms of cancer to help reduce your risks. Advances in the ways that cancer is diagnosed and treated have increased the number of people who live disease-free for long periods of time.<sup>2</sup>

### ABOUT CANCER

Cancer is a term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control. It can invade other tissues and spread to other parts of your body.<sup>3</sup>

### MAIN TYPES OF CANCER<sup>4</sup>

There are more than 100 types of cancer diseases, usually named for the organs or tissues where they develop. These are the main types.

#### › Carcinoma

The most commonly diagnosed cancer, it can start in your skin, lungs, breasts, pancreas, and other organs and glands.

#### › Lymphoma

Cancer that begins in the infection-fighting cells of your immune system. There are two main types: Hodgkin's lymphoma and Non-Hodgkin's lymphoma

#### › Leukemia

Cancer of the blood. It does not usually form solid tumors.

#### › Melanoma

The most serious type of skin cancer. It develops in the cells that make the pigment in your skin.

#### › Sarcoma

A rare cancer that grows in bone, muscle, fat, blood vessels, cartilage or other soft or connective tissues.

### ABOUT TUMORS<sup>4</sup>

Many cancers form a solid mass called a tumor. Tumors are a cluster of abnormal cells.

- › Some tumors are cancerous and some are not.
- › Cancerous tumors are malignant, which means they can spread into or invade nearby tissues.
- › Cancers can also grow and travel to distant places in the body through the blood or lymph system. This is called metastasis.
- › Noncancerous tumors are benign. They do not spread to other parts of the body and do not create new tumors.



Cancer is a group of diseases that is the second leading cause of death in the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Together, all the way.®



## WHAT TO WATCH FOR

Signs and symptoms caused by cancer will vary depending on what part of the body is affected. Some general symptoms that may be associated with cancer include:<sup>5</sup>

- › Lump or area of thickening under the skin
- › Weight changes (loss or gain) with no known reason
- › Skin changes
  - Yellowing, darkening or redness of the skin
  - Sores that won't heal
  - Changes to existing moles
- › Changes in bowel habits; difficult or painful urination
- › Feeling weak or very tired
- › Persistent indigestion<sup>1</sup> or discomfort after eating
- › Difficulty swallowing
- › Hoarseness
- › Persistent cough or trouble breathing
- › Breast changes
- › Fevers or night sweats
- › Unusual bleeding (such as blood in urine or stool) or bruising

## KNOW YOUR RISK, REDUCE YOUR RISK

Cancer often develops in people without any known risk factors.<sup>1</sup> Some things that increase your risk of cancer include:<sup>1</sup>

### › Lifestyle choices

Alcohol – the more you drink, the higher your risk<sup>6</sup>

Tobacco – smoking can cause cancer almost anywhere in your body<sup>6</sup>

Excessive exposure to sun and sunburns<sup>3</sup>

Obesity

- › **Age** – it's more common in older adults, but can develop at any age

- › **Family history** – some cancers are due to inherited conditions

- › **Health conditions** – including human papilloma virus (HPV)<sup>6</sup> and inflammatory bowel disease (IBD)

- › **Environment** – including secondhand smoke and harmful chemicals in your home or workplace



### GET SCREENED

Screenings can help to detect and treat cancer sometimes even before any signs or symptoms appear. Talk to your doctor about what screenings you should have.



1. Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. "Cancer." <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/symptoms-causes/syc-20370588> (March 9, 2018).

2. National Cancer Institute. "Survival." <https://progressreport.cancer.gov/after/survival> (last updated February 2018).

3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "How to Prevent Cancer or Find It Early." <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dccp/prevention/index.htm> (last reviewed/last updated May 2, 2018).

4. WebMD. "Understanding Cancer – the Basics." <https://www.webmd.com/cancer/understanding-cancer-basics> (reviewed January 27, 2018).

5. National Cancer Institute. "Symptoms of Cancer." <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/diagnosis-staging/symptoms> (reviewed March 29, 2018).

6. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Risk Factors and Cancer." [https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk\\_factors.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk_factors.htm) (last reviewed/last updated April 4, 2018).

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