

Cancer



*“Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, accounting for 8.8 million deaths in 2015.”**

What is cancer?

Cancer is a serious condition in which abnormal cells develop and divide in an uncontrolled way, invading normal cells. The disease – which is also called *malignancy, tumour or neoplasm* – can affect people at any age and almost any part of the body. Cancer can spread to different parts of the body and some can recur.

Cancer is not a single disease – it is a term for a group of diseases. There are more than 100 types, each with its own name and treatment.

It is a leading cause of death worldwide. The cancers which most commonly kill are lung, liver, colorectal, stomach and breast.

Causes

The exact cause is not known. However, we do know that certain agents called *carcinogens* like tobacco, alcohol, ultraviolet radiation, air pollution, asbestos and some infections damage cells and may cause cancer. Ageing, genetics and other factors also play a part.

Screening

Screening means checking for cancer when there are no symptoms. It is commonly done for breast, bowel

and cervical cancers. However, not everyone needs to be screened for all cancers.

Cancer is treatable

Treatment is most effective if cancer is detected early. Learn the early signs. Seek prompt medical attention for symptoms such as:

- A lump
- Cough for more than three weeks
- Chest pain
- Breathlessness
- Blood in urine, cough, vomit
- Difficulty in swallowing
- Change in bowel habits – diarrhoea, constipation, pain, persistent abdominal bloating, feeling of fullness
- Skin changes
- Unexplained weight loss
- Unexplained fevers or night sweats
- Fatigue

Each type of cancer has its own treatment.

Treatment aims to cure, prolong life and improve quality of life for patients.

PREVENTION: More than 30% of all cancer cases could have been prevented!

Avoid tobacco and its smoke. It is an important risk factor for lung and several other cancers.



Limit alcohol consumption to lower risk of breast, colon, mouth, oesophagus and liver cancer.



Eat healthy – include plenty of fruits and vegetables. Avoid processed meats. Maintain a healthy weight.



Exercise regularly – Do at least 150 minutes of moderate physical activity (i.e. brisk walking) every week.

Reduce exposure to mid-day sun, urban air pollution, indoor smoke and radiation.



Get immunised - hepatitis B vaccination prevents most liver cancers while HPV vaccination prevents most cervical and some other cancers.



Speak to your doctor about cancer screening and immunisation.

*Source: World Health Organization, Cancer fact sheet, February 2017

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