



# About Cancer

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The human body is made up of trillions of cells, and each cell is controlled by a very specific process to keep our bodies healthy. Cells divide and grow when and where they are needed, and when they become old or damaged, they die to make way for new (healthy) cells.<sup>1</sup>

Cancer disrupts this process by causing cells to grow and divide uncontrollably or allowing damaged cells to survive when they shouldn't. Cancer cells can form growths called tumors that can spread into surrounding healthy tissue or break off and form new tumors far from the original site.<sup>1</sup>

There are over 100 different types of cancer. Most cancers are named for the cells or part of the body where they start (for example, lung cancer starts in the lungs).<sup>1</sup>

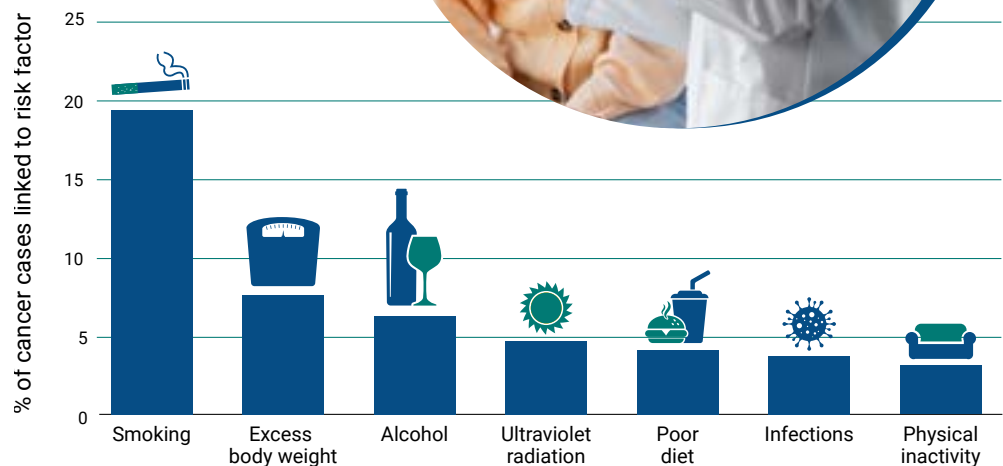
Most cancers are caused by changes in the genes that control the way your cells grow and divide. These changes can occur spontaneously with age or from exposure to certain damaging factors in your environment.<sup>1</sup>



## Risk Factors for Cancer



Several environmental and lifestyle conditions called risk factors can increase your chances of developing cancer. You can prevent some of these risk factors, but some are beyond your control. Having one or more risk factors does not mean you will develop cancer, but it may increase your chances.<sup>2</sup>



### Factors that Increase Cancer Risk

Source: Cancer Progress Report.org [Internet]. Philadelphia: American Association of Cancer Research; ©2022 Accessed May 3, 2023. <http://www.CancerProgressReport.org/>



Four out of 10 cancer cases in the U.S. are due to factors you can control.<sup>2</sup>

If you are concerned about your cancer risk, take steps to avoid the risk factors you can control and talk with your doctor about other options to lower your risk for cancer.

## What Can You Do to Lower Your Risk of Cancer?



You can significantly reduce your chances of getting certain cancers if you do the following:<sup>2,3</sup>

- Don't smoke and avoid secondhand smoke. Smoking can cause cancer in almost every part of your body
- Ask your doctor about vaccines that can prevent certain infections that can cause cancer
- Avoid indoor tanning, use sunscreen, and limit your time spent in the sun
- Limit alcohol use
- Be physically active
- Eat a healthy diet
- Maintain a healthy weight

## What Are the Common Symptoms for Cancer?



Cancer may cause many kinds of symptoms. A few examples are:<sup>4</sup>

- Night sweats or fever that does not go away
- Weight loss for no reason
- Fatigue (feeling tired or weak) that is severe and does not go away
- A new lump or mole, or a change in an existing mole
- Nausea and vomiting
- Bleeding or bruising for no known reason
- Blood in the stool or urine
- Cough or hoarseness that does not go away



Conditions such as illness, injury, or benign tumors can also cause the types of symptoms listed here. That's why it is important to consult with your doctor if you have symptoms that do not improve after a few weeks. Also, don't wait until symptoms become painful before seeking help. Cancer does not always cause pain. No matter what the cause, it's important to get problems diagnosed and treated early.<sup>4</sup>

## Why is Screening for Cancer Important?



Screening can help detect some types of cancer before symptoms appear. Cancer diagnosed at an earlier stage is usually easier to treat and may have a better chance of being cured.<sup>5</sup>

Your doctor can perform the following types of cancer screenings at your next visit:<sup>5</sup>

- Physical exam to look for signs of disease, such as lumps, moles, or sores
- Personal and family history of cancer and other illnesses
- Lab tests using blood, tissue, urine, or other bodily substances
- Imaging procedures such as ultrasound, x-ray, or MRIs that make pictures of areas inside your body
- Genetic tests to check for changes in your genes. The results may help confirm a diagnosis or risk of cancer, and guide future medical care

Ask your doctor which screening tests are right for you.



### References:

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