

Cancer

Cancer is caused by abnormal cells that grow quickly. It is normal for your body to replace old cells with new ones, but cancer cells grow too fast.

Some cancer cells may form growths called tumors. All tumors increase in size, but some tumors grow quickly, others slowly.

Types of Tumors

- Sometimes tumors are not cancerous. These are called **benign** tumors. They are made up of cells much like those of healthy tissue. This kind of tumor stays in one area and does not spread to healthy tissues and organs.
- Cancer tumors are also called **malignant** tumors. Cancer from these tumors spread through the blood and lymph systems to other parts of the body.

When cancer spreads, it is called **metastasis**. Cancer cells travel through the blood or lymph system from the tumor, called the primary site, to other parts of the body.

Types of Cancer

There are many kinds of cancers.

- Carcinoma is the most common type of cancer. Lung, colon, breast and ovarian cancers are often this type of cancer.
- Sarcoma is found in bone, cartilage, fat and muscle.
- Lymphoma begins in the lymph nodes of the body's immune system. They include Hodgkin's and Non-Hodgkin's Lymphomas.
- Leukemia starts in the blood cells that grow in the bone marrow and are found in large numbers in the bloodstream.

Signs of Cancer

Signs of cancer depend on the type and location of the tumor. With some cancers, there may not be any signs until the tumor is large. Common signs include:

- Feeling very tired
- Weight loss that occurs without knowing why
- Fever, chills or night sweats
- Lack of hunger
- Physical discomfort or pain
- Coughing, shortness of breath or chest pain
- Diarrhea, constipation or blood in the stool

When cancer is found, tests will be done to see if the cancer has spread to other parts of your body. Scans, x-rays and blood tests may be needed.

Your Care

Your doctor will decide what care is needed based on:

- The type of cancer
- How fast the cancer is growing
- Whether the cancer has spread to other parts of your body
- Your age and overall health

The most common cancer treatments are:

- Surgery to remove the tumor and nearby tissue
- Radiation in controlled amounts to shrink or destroy the tumor and cancer cells
- Chemotherapy medicine to slow the growth or destroy cancer cells
- Other medicines to treat side effects and help you heal better

Prevention

You can reduce your risk of cancer by:

- Not smoking or using tobacco.
- Using sunscreen, hats and clothing to protect your skin when outside.
- Limiting the amount of alcohol you drink.
- Limiting the amount of high fat foods you eat, especially from animal sources.
- Eating plenty of fruits, vegetables and high fiber foods.
- Being physically active.
- Seeing your doctor each year. Cancer screenings may help find cancers at their early, most treatable stages.

Talk to your doctor or nurse about your cancer risks.