

WELLNESSMONTHLY

Cancer Awareness: Prevention and Early Detection | October 2019

Cancer Awareness: Prevention and Early Detection

October is National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which provides an annual reminder to get preventive and early detection checkups as recommended based on your overall cancer risk profile.

Cancer is not one disease but more than 40 diseases of different organs with a common feature – uncontrolled growth of cells.

Breast cancer is the most commonly occurring cancer in the U.S. The next most common are lung and prostate cancer. All of the most common types are listed by the [National Cancer Institute](#) on its website.

What Causes Cancer?

Many factors influence risk for developing certain types of cancer. They include:

- **Genetic predisposition** or family history of cancer
- **Individual characteristics** such as age, sex, race and ethnicity
- **Personal choices** such as diet, cigarette smoking and alcohol consumption
- **Environmental exposures**, for example, sunlight, radon gas or air pollution
- **Exposure to a carcinogen** (a cancer-causing agent)
- **Presence of certain medical conditions** or past medical treatments

Some types of cancer are more common in men than women (and vice versa), certain racial or ethnic groups, and among people with shared characteristics such as a history of tobacco use, certain hobbies or spending a lot of time outdoors in the sun.

Prevention

Exposure to cancer-causing agents and conditions is preventable. Not smoking, maintaining a healthy weight and staying physically fit helps improve the body's ability to resist cancer.



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To help prevent skin cancer caused by exposure to UV radiation:

- Cover exposed skin with clothing
- Wear a hat and sunglasses
- Routinely apply broad-spectrum sunscreen and lip balm

A sun protection factor of 30 filters out about 97 percent of harmful rays.

It's possible to prevent exposure to known and probable human carcinogens by avoiding products and materials that may contain them and following exposure prevention recommendations.

The American Cancer Society lists [known and](#)

[probable human carcinogens on its website](#) using determinations made by the International [Agency for Research on Cancer \(IARC\)](#), the U.S. National Toxicology Program (NTP) and other agencies as sources.

In the workplace, exposure prevention is addressed in Occupational Safety and Health Administration standards for general industry, shipyard employment and construction. Solutions for the prevention of occupational cancers include:

- Complying with regulatory and industry standards for the management of hazardous substances and conditions
- Following recommended industrial hygiene and safety practices, including the hierarchy of controls
- Providing appropriate personal protective equipment and training on correct and consistent use

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health recommends reducing worker exposure to chemical carcinogens through elimination or substitution and engineering controls. Potential routes of exposure include inhalation, skin absorption and ingestion.

The likelihood of developing cancer when exposed to a carcinogenic agent is low. Consistent use of protection and prevention measures further decreases exposure risk and helps relieve anxiety about potential health effects.

Did You Know?

Health events often seem to occur in a cluster or sequence. However, cancer clusters are rarely found. Among 500 cancer cluster investigations conducted during a 20-year period, only one in eight found an increase in cancer rates; a definite cause for cancer was identified in just one instance. Cancer is common. It's not unusual for several people in a group – such as an employee population or local community – to develop cancer around the same time, the American Cancer Society reports.



Breast Cancer Early Detection Saves Lives

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women. It is relatively rare in men, but the mortality rate is statistically higher for men because they are less likely than women to get a suspicious lump checked by a medical professional.

Chances of survival significantly increase when breast cancer is detected early.

What Can You Do?

1. Women should perform monthly self-examination and follow recommendations for periodic mammograms to detect cancer based on their age and risk profile. Breast compression while getting a mammogram cannot cause cancer to spread and the screening exam only uses small doses of radiation.
2. Men should also do self-exams, especially around the nipple. Clinical screening is only recommended for men with higher than average risk.
3. Get a clinical exam if you notice any of the following:
 - Lump, hard knot or thickening inside the breast or underarm area
 - Swelling, warmth, redness or darkening of the breast
 - Change in the size or shape of the breast
 - Dimpling or puckering of the skin
 - Itchy, scaly sore or rash on the nipple
 - Pulling in of the nipple or other parts of the breast
 - Nipple discharge that starts suddenly
 - New pain in one spot that doesn't go away