

Participate in Cancer Screening

What is Cancer?

The National Cancer Institute defines cancer as “A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control and can invade nearby tissues. Cancer cells can also spread to other parts of the body through the blood and lymph systems.”

(<http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/cancerlibrary/what-is-cancer>)

Take Steps Now to Prevent Cancer

- Schedule an appointment with your doctor to get the prescriptions and referrals you need for cancer screenings.
- Overcome your fear of uncomfortable screenings or your worries about the results by reminding yourself that the earlier cancer is found, the more likely that it can be treated successfully.
- Do not use tobacco products.
- Be physically active—at least 30 minutes a day, most days of the week.
- Choose foods with less animal fat and more fiber.
- Use sunscreen and avoid tanning booths.
- Drink less alcohol—no more than 1 drink a day for women or 2 for men.

Many Cancers Have Warning Signs

The American Cancer Society describes an easy way to look for symptoms of possible cancers using the **CAUTION** program. It is important to know some of the symptoms of different types of cancer. For example, be aware of the following:



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- C**.....Change in bowel or bladder habits
- A**.....A sore that does not heal
- U**.....Unusual bleeding or discharge
- T**....Thickening or a lump in any part of the body
- I**.....Indigestion or difficulty swallowing
- O**....Obvious change in a wart or a mole
- N**....Nagging cough or hoarseness

These could suggest cancer but are not diagnostic.
Bring such signs to your doctor's attention for further evaluation.

<http://www.webmd.com/cancer/understanding-cancer-symptoms>

Take Action

Prevent or Detect Cancer Early

Early Detection Can Save Your Life!

Screenings may involve a physical exam, lab tests, or other procedures. **You should always discuss your personal risks for cancer and your need for screenings with your doctor.** Medicare now covers many screening tests. If you feel you are unable to pay for screenings that you need, contact your hospital or a local free clinic to find out about assistance programs.

Site	Recommendation
Colon & Rectum	<p>At the age of 50, request a prescription to see a gastroenterologist and begin screening using one of the following exam schedules:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A fecal occult blood test (FOBT) or fecal immunochemical test (FIT) yearly and a flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years• A colonoscopy every 10 years <p>If you have an immediate relative diagnosed with colon cancer before age 60 (or two relatives diagnosed at any age), then you should receive a colonoscopy every 5 years beginning at age 40 (or 10 years before the age at which the youngest relative was diagnosed).</p>
Breast (Women)	<p>Yearly mammograms starting at age 40 are highly recommended.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• To receive a mammogram, request a prescription from your doctor.• Speak to your doctor about regular exams/tests if you have had breast cancer and/or a family history of breast cancer.• A clinical breast exam should be part of your annual health exam.
Uterus & Cervix (Women)	<p>Screenings for cervical cancer (PAP test) should be done every 1-3 years, depending upon your history of abnormal PAP tests and certain risk factors, such as HIV or a weak immune system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you are 75 or over, you may want to ask your doctors whether stopping cervical exams is appropriate. <p>After menopause, you should ask your doctor about risks for endometrial cancer and report any unexpected bleeding or spotting.</p>
Prostate (Men)	<p>Discuss your prostate cancer risks with your doctor. Screening tests are available, including the Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) blood test and the digital rectal exam. While many men begin screening at age 50, men with a family history of certain cancers may benefit from screening at an earlier age.</p>

More Information About Cancer Screening

Inform

Cancer-Related Words That Your Doctor May Use

Antigen: Stimulates an immune response in the body

Benign: No cancer found

Colonoscopy: A physician inserts a tube with a camera at the end, through the rectum. The physician is able to look at the lining of the entire colon for abnormalities.

DRE: Digital rectal exam (finger exam of rectum by doctor)

Environmental Factors: Tobacco use, unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, infectious disease, radiation, & chemicals which can all contribute to cancer

Fecal Occult Blood Test: Detects blood in the stool which can be a sign of colon cancer, hemorrhoids, or other health problems.

Genetic marker: A DNA sequence that identifies a particular trait or gene

Hemoccult: Hidden blood

Malignant: Cancer is found

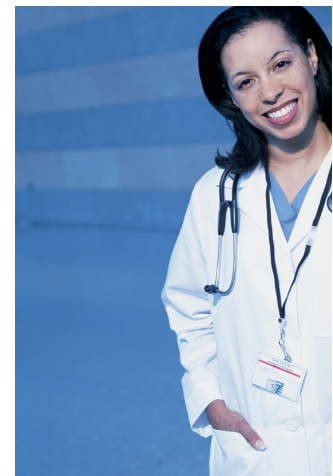
Polyp: Abnormal growth of tissue (tumor) that may be benign or malignant

Prostate: A walnut-sized gland in men that is located near the urethra. The urethra is the tube that takes the urine from the bladder to the outside of the body.

PSA: Prostate specific antigen (blood test for prostate cancer)

Sigmoidoscopy: A physician inserts a tube with a camera at the end through the rectum. The physician is able to look for abnormalities in the lining of the lower end of the colon. The doctor cannot view the entire colon with this test.

Tumor: A mass of tissue that is the result of the uncontrolled growth of body cells. Can be malignant (cancer) or benign (not cancer).



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Cancer Screenings

Sharing the Wealth on Health

Tips for Promoting Cancer Screening Participation

- Call your local hospital and ask if they give tours of the cancer screening facilities. If they do, arrange a tour for some friends and family so they can become more comfortable with the process of cancer screening.
- Encourage others to take photographs of body moles. They should keep these photos and discuss any changes with their doctor or a dermatologist.
- Find a screening “buddy.” Get on schedule with a friend to have your regular screenings done. It may be easier to remember to have them done if you do them together. It also serves as good support during potentially unpleasant test preparations or procedures, as well as during times of concern about test results.
- Participate in or support community awareness events such as “Race for the Cure” or the “Pace Race.”
- Help educate people and reduce screening fears by sharing accurate information about screening procedures.



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Ideas for Promoting Cancer Screenings

Personal Goals & Action Steps

My Personal Cancer Screening and Prevention Goals:



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Steps Toward Attaining My Goals

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Cancer Screenings

Take-Home Assignment #1

Participating in cancer screenings is key to early detection and successful treatment of cancer. Talk to your doctor and review your medical records so that you can fill in the chart below and get a prescription for those screenings.

Screening Test	Frequency	Date of Last Test	Scheduled?
Whole Body Exam/ Physical	Once per Yr.		
Clinical Breast Exam (women)	Once per Yr.		
Mammogram (women)	Every 1-2 Yrs.		
Pap Test (women)	Every 1-3 Yrs.		
Pelvic Exam (women)	Once per Yr.		
Prostate Specific Antigen (men)	As Doctor recommends		
Skin Exam	Once per Yr.		
Digital Rectal Exam	Every 5 Yrs.		
Fecal Occult Blood Test	Every 5 Yrs.		
Colonoscopy	Every 10 Yrs.		

The American Cancer Society can provide more information about screenings and results. You can contact them by phone at 1-800-ACS-2345, or visit their Web site: www.cancer.org for information about cancer screening sites in your area as well as possible free screenings.

You can then take this information and provide it to others interested in cancer screenings.

Frequently Asked Questions

What causes breast cancer?

The exact causes of breast cancer are unknown, but there are risk factors linked to the disease.

Risk factors you can't control:

- Sex: women are at higher risk than men.
- Age: risk increases with age.
- Genes: some breast cancers are linked to genetic changes.
- Family History: having a relative with breast cancer doubles your risk.
- Race: Caucasian women are at highest risk.

Lifestyle factors that increase risk and that you can control:

- Drinking more than one alcoholic drink a day (for women)
- Taking postmenopausal hormone replacement therapy
- Being overweight
- Being physically inactive

How do hormones play a role in breast cancer?

The levels of hormones in our bodies are carefully controlled. When the hormone levels are too high, they can make the cells grow and divide uncontrollably. The hormones can also stop the cells from dying when they are damaged. This can lead to cancer.

Can men get breast cancer?

Yes, men can be diagnosed with breast cancer. Women are diagnosed with breast cancer more frequently than men.

What causes cervical cancer?

The cause of cervical cancer is unknown. One risk factor is HPV (human papilloma virus), which is spread through unprotected sexual contact.



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If I had a hysterectomy, do I still need to have a PAP test?

Gynecological exams are important because the doctor checks the rectum, ovaries, vagina, and uterus. If you have had a total hysterectomy, discuss the need for follow up with your doctor.

Cancer Screenings

Frequently Asked Questions

If I feel fine, do I still need to have a cancer screening?

Yes. Cancer screening is important because it may detect a problem before you have symptoms. Early detection is key to successful prevention and treatment.

Why does my doctor order a colonoscopy more often than 10 years?

How often you should get a colonoscopy depends on your family history, whether you've had colon polyps, and other risk factors.

I never get undressed for my annual physical exam. How does my doctor check for skin cancer?

The only way to assess skin for skin cancer is to examine every inch of your body. You should examine your skin for abnormalities at least once a month. Your body should be examined head to toe by a doctor for skin abnormalities each year.

If I've never had a sunburn, can I still get skin cancer?

Yes. You can get skin cancer whether you've had a sunburn or not. Make sure to have your skin checked regularly by a doctor.

If I have dark skin, can I still get skin cancer?

Yes. Even though individuals with darker skin have more natural protection from the sun, they can still get skin cancer. While people with lighter skin are at higher risk for skin cancer., everyone should be screened regularly.



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The questions I still have about cancer screenings are: _____
