



GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT CANCER

Cancer is an abnormal growth of cells that grow out of control and invade other tissues. There are more than 100 types of cancer, the most common of which are prostate cancer, breast cancer, and lung cancer.

Cancer cells can spread to other parts of the body through the blood and lymph systems, where they begin to expand and form tumors. Over time, when the cancer cells get into the body's bloodstream or lymph vessels, the tumors replace normal tissue. This process of cancer spreading is called metastasis.

Cancer symptoms vary widely based on the type of cancer, and treatment may include chemotherapy, radiation, or surgery.

According to the American Cancer Society, about 1,660,290 new cancer cases are expected to be diagnosed in 2013, and in 2013 about 580,350 Americans are projected to die of cancer (almost 1,600 people a day). Cancer remains the second most common cause of death in the US, accounting for nearly one of every four deaths.



HOW CANCER STARTS

Cancer starts when cells in a part of the body start to grow out of control. Cells become cancer cells because of damage to the cell's DNA. In a normal cell, when DNA gets damaged the cell either repairs the damage or the cell dies. In cancer cells, the damaged DNA is not repaired, and the cell doesn't die like it should. Instead, the cell goes on making new cells that the body doesn't need. These new cells all have the same abnormal DNA as the first cell does.

People can inherit abnormal DNA, but most DNA damage is caused by mistakes that happen while the normal cell is reproducing or by something in the environment. Sometimes the cause of the DNA damage may be something obvious like cigarette smoking or sun exposure. But it's rare to know exactly what caused any one person's cancer.

HOW COMMON IS CANCER?

Half of all men and one-third of all women in the US will develop cancer during their lifetimes, according to the American Cancer Society.

Today, millions of people are living with cancer or have had cancer. The risk of developing many types of cancer can be reduced by changes in lifestyle, such as avoiding tobacco, limiting time in the sun, being physically active, and healthy eating. There are also screening tests that can be done for some types of cancers so they can be found as early as possible – while they are small and before they have spread. Talk to your physician about what screening tests are best for you.

DID YOU KNOW?

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