



THE IMPACT OF CANCER

Each year, nearly 1.4 million new cases of cancer are diagnosed in the United States. . Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S., accounting for 560,000 deaths every year.

CANCER PREVENTION IS THE FIRST STEP

It is important that you know your risk for cancer and those factors that you can control – such as lifestyle, exercise and nutrition choices. You should also know those you cannot control such as family history, gender and age. While risk factors can vary greatly, there are changes you can make to decrease your overall risk for cancer.

- Quit smoking if you are a smoker;
- Protect yourself from the sun;
- Eat a healthy diet that includes plenty of fruits and vegetables;
- Limit red meat consumption;
- Do not consume too much alcohol;
- Keep your body at a healthy weight;
- Incorporate regular exercise and physical activity into your daily routine;
- Be aware of your health and any changes in your body; make sure you check yourself for unusual lumps or moles. If you find something, be sure to have it checked by your health care provider.

CANCER SCREENING GUIDE

Fortunately, for certain forms of the disease, there are screenings that can detect cancer in its earliest stages.

Breast Cancer

Your Risk:

Breast cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in American women. It is projected that in 2007 alone, about 178,000 women in the United States will be diagnosed with invasive breast cancer. The promising news is that most women diagnosed with the disease at an early stage do survive and continue to live normal lives. Factors that place a person at higher risk for breast cancer, are:

- Sex – Being a woman is the leading risk factor for breast cancer, primarily because of the complex hormonal changes that occur during a woman's lifetime.
- Age – As you age, your chance of getting breast cancer increases.
- Family history – If you have a mother, sister or daughter who has had breast cancer, you are at double the risk for the disease. A family history of breast or ovarian cancer on the father's side can also increase breast cancer risk.
- Reproductive health history – Longer-term exposure to estrogen affects your risk of breast cancer. You are at higher risk if you had your first period before age 12 or reached menopause after age 55.
- Ethnic or racial background – Caucasian women have the highest risk, followed by African-American and Hawaiian women. Hispanic-American and Asian-American women appear to have the lowest risks.

- Hereditary breast cancer – Multiple relatives with breast or ovarian cancers, especially diagnosed at young ages, may suggest inherited breast cancer risk. However, only five to 10 percent of breast cancer is associated with a mutation in a strong gene.
- Previous findings – If you have previously had breast cancer or a breast biopsy that showed irregular changes, you may be at increased risk for breast cancer.
- Hormone replacement therapy – The use of hormone replacement therapy in the form of estrogen and progesterone, for longer than five years, places you at a slightly higher risk for breast cancer.
- Not having children or having children later in life – If you never have given birth or have delivered your first child after age 30, you are at increased risk.
- Alcohol consumption – Drinking wine, beer and hard liquor have been shown to elevate the amount of estrogen in a woman’s blood. Anything that increases your long-term exposure to estrogen increases your risk of breast cancer.
- Being overweight – Depending on several other factors, having excess weight can increase your risk of breast cancer

Screening Recommendations:

- Ages 18-34: Monthly self-exam; physician exam at general physical; mammogram usually not required*
- Ages 35-49: Monthly self-exam; physician exam at general physical; mammogram yearly after age 40, as reviewed with physician*
- Ages 50+: Monthly self-exam; physician exam at general physical; mammogram yearly*

* Women with a family history of breast cancer may need to start mammography earlier. It is important to discuss your risk for breast cancer with your health care provider so that together you can make a plan. Breast MRI is being evaluated to determine its proper use for screening. The best evidence to date is in women at high risk based on personal and family cancer history. Breast radiologists may sometimes recommend MRI as a supplement to mammography for screening.

Cervical Cancer

Your Risk:

The number of American women who die annually from cervical cancer has decreased steadily over the past 40 years – due in large part to the Pap screening test.

You are at higher risk for cervical cancer if you:

- had exposure to DES (diethylstilbestrol, a synthetic hormone) that was given to your mother while she was pregnant with you;
- have had an abnormal Pap test;
- are being treated with immunosuppressive medications;
- have had a history of high-risk HPV strain;
- are a current smoker.

Screening Recommendations:

- Adolescents-age 30: Pap tests should be obtained within three years of the onset of sexual activity, or by age 21, and then every 1-2 years until age 30
- Age 30+: Healthy women who have had three consecutive normal Pap tests may have Pap tests at 1-3 year intervals. Women who are immunocompromised or who have other medical issues may need more frequent screening, at the discretion of her physician. In addition, the new HPV vaccine is available for women ages 9-26. Ideally patients should receive the vaccine before the onset of sexual activity. Since the vaccine does not prevent all cases of cervical cancer or precancers, patients who receive the vaccine still need routine screening.

Skin Cancer

Your Risk:

Skin cancer statistics show that one in five Americans develops skin cancer and every hour one American dies of the disease. Skin cancer is caused most often by overexposure to the sun and its ultraviolet (UV) rays. It is important to practice proper sun protection to reduce your risk of skin cancer.

Your risk of developing skin cancer is increased if you:

- have light skin color (fair-skinned people with blond or red hair and blue or light-colored eyes have a greater risk of developing skin cancer than dark-skinned people);
- freckle easily;
- have had frequent, severe sunburns;
- live in an environment with high degrees of sun exposure;
- have an inability to tan;
- have a family history of skin cancer.

Screening Recommendations:

- Ages 18-34: Monthly self-exam of moles and birthmarks and by physician at general physical
- Ages 35-49: Monthly self-exam of moles and birthmarks and by physician at general physical
- Ages 50+: Monthly self-exam of moles and birthmarks and by physician at general physical

Colorectal Cancer

Your Risk:

Colorectal cancer – one of the most treatable forms of cancer when detected early – is a disease in which cancer cells grow in the colon, rectum or both. Factors that place a person at higher risk for colorectal cancer, are:

- Age – According to the American Cancer Society, more than 90 percent of colorectal cancer cases are diagnosed in people over the age of 50.
- Polyps – Benign growths of the colon and rectum increase your risk, particularly if it is an inherited condition.
- Family history – If a first-degree relative in your family – a parent, sibling, or child – has had the disease or has had polyps, you are at higher risk.
- Diet – A diet that is high in red meat fats will place you at higher risk.

Screening Recommendations:

- Ages 18-34: Usually not required
- Ages 35-49: Review risks and needs yearly with your health care provider
- Ages 50+: Yearly stool occult blood test; screening with flexible sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy determined by your health care provider based on your risk profile

Lung Cancer

Your Risk:

The number one risk for lung cancer is smoking. If you smoke, you should quit. Aside from smoking – which places you at the highest risk – you are at increased risk of lung cancer if you have had:

- prior surgery for another lung cancer;
- occupational exposure to asbestos;
- prolonged exposure to high levels of radon.