

# we'll fight with you

## Cancer

The very word strikes fear in most of us. It's true that cancer is a serious disease and a leading cause of death worldwide. However, you have more control over your risk for developing cancer—and the likelihood you will die from cancer—than you might realize.

### From Fear to Action

By recognizing potential signs of cancer, reducing your risk factors, and undergoing appropriate screening, you can move through fear to prevention and early intervention.

**Recognize symptoms of cancer.** No one wants to learn that she has cancer. However, seeing your doctor promptly if you have symptoms that could indicate cancer means you can begin treatment immediately if you are diagnosed. Treating cancer before it spreads significantly improves your prognosis. Thanks to recent advancements in treatment, more and more people are surviving cancer. In fact, cancer deaths declined 23% between 1991 and 2012.

The most common signs of cancer include:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Blood in the stool
- A change in a mole or a new mole
- An abnormal lump below the skin, often in the breast, testicles, lymph nodes or soft tissue

While these are the most common signs of cancer, you should always talk to your healthcare provider if you experience any changes in your body that you are concerned about.



**Action Item:** Talk to your primary care physician about your risks for developing cancer. Together, develop a proactive lifestyle plan to help you prevent cancer. Ask your doctor which age-and risk-appropriate cancer screening tests and immunizations are appropriate for you.

**Reduce your risk factors.** Experts agree that one-third to **one-half of all cancers worldwide are attributed to preventable causes.** This means you can take steps to reduce YOUR risk of developing cancer.



-  **Don't smoke.** Seventy-five percent of U.S. lung cancer cases are attributed to smoking. If you don't smoke, don't start. If you already smoke, quit. Electronic cigarettes are not a safe alternative to traditional cigarettes.
-  **Maintain a healthy weight.** One in every five new cases of cancer in the U.S. is related to being overweight or obese. Ask your doctor about a healthy weight goal.
-  **Eat a healthy diet.** Limit your consumption of added sugars, fats, and processed foods and load up on fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and low-fat dairy foods. Your doctor or a nutritionist can help you develop a cancer-preventing eating plan.
-  **Move.** Be physically active at least 30 minutes daily or 2 ½ hours weekly. Include muscle-strengthening exercises at least two times each week.
-  **Practice safe sun habits.** Wear sunscreen, hats, wrap-around glasses and protective clothing, and limit your time in the sun during peak hours (10 A.M. to 2 P.M.). Avoid tanning beds.
-  **Protect yourself against cancer-causing pathogens.** Together, these four pathogens accounted for about two million cases of cancer: helicobacter pylori, hepatitis B virus (HBV), hepatitis C virus (HCV), and human papillomavirus (HPV). Ask your doctor whether immunizations for HBV and HPV are appropriate for you and how you can avoid high-risk behaviors.
-  **Know your family history of cancer.** You may be at increased risk for cancer if someone in your immediately family has had cancer. Be sure to share your family medical history with your doctor.



Currently, medical evidence supports the following screening for asymptomatic adults who are at average risk for developing cancer. If you have additional risk factors, such as a family history, your doctor may recommend earlier or more frequent screening.

**Breast cancer:**

Women aged 50 to 74 should be screened every one to two years.

**Colorectal cancer:**

Adults aged 50 to 75 should be screened. The frequency depends upon the type of screening test. Ask your doctor which test is right for you.

**Cervical cancer:**

Women aged 21 to 65 should be screened. Ask your doctor which Pap test and HPV screening is right for you.

**Lung cancer:**

Adults aged 55 to 79 who are at high risk due to a history of heavy smoking should be screened.

In addition to finding cancers early, screening for cervical and colorectal cancers lowers your risk of disease by allowing doctors to remove precancerous lesions before they become cancerous.