



World Cancer Day was February 4th. Cancer is one of the leading causes of death throughout the world. The aim of this day is to raise awareness of cancer prevention, early detection and treatment.

To reduce your risk of cancer, avoid all forms of tobacco, eat a diet rich in vegetables and fruit, stay active, stay at a healthy weight, drink no more than one alcoholic beverage per day for women or two per day for men, and protect yourself from the sun.

Cancer is a group of diseases in which cells begin to grow out of control. Cancer can develop anywhere. Cancer cells crowd out normal cells and cause problems in the part of the body where the

cancer started. Most cancers form a lump called a tumor. If left untreated, tumors can grow and spread into the surrounding normal tissue, or to other parts of the body via the bloodstream and lymphatic systems. Tumors can be benign or malignant. Benign tumors are slow growing and rarely life threatening. Malignant tumors are faster growing, spread to neighboring tissues, and can break off and travel to other parts of the body. Those secondary sites are called metastases and the condition is known as metastatic cancer.

The American Cancer Society recommends the following screening:

- Yearly mammograms for women starting at age 45, or as soon as age 40 if you choose. Monthly self-breast exams.
- Colonoscopies and/or stool tests beginning at age 45.
- Cervical cancer screening beginning at age 25.
- Men should talk to their healthcare provider about the pros and cons of testing for prostate cancer beginning at age 45.
- Smokers should talk to their healthcare provider about lung cancer screening.
- If you have a family history of cancer, let your provider know so that further screening can be done if necessary.

The signs and symptoms of different cancers vary. However, there are some key signs and symptoms to watch for, including:

- Unusual lumps or swelling - they are often painless and can increase in size
- Coughing, breathlessness or difficulty swallowing
- Changes in bowel habit, such as constipation, diarrhea, and/or blood in the stool
- Unexplained and unintentional weight loss
- Fatigue
- New mole, or changes to a mole. Look for changes in size, shape, color, and if it becomes crusty, bleeds, or oozes.
- Complications with urinating, including needing to go more urgently or more frequently, or begin unable to go when you need to, or pain while urinating
- Unusual breast changes, such as changes in size, shape, feel, skin changes, or pain
- Loss of appetite
- A sore or ulcer that doesn't heal
- Persistent or painful heartburn or indigestion
- Heavy night sweats
- Unexplained bleeding or bruising

In short, if something doesn't feel right, don't wait. Make an appointment to see your provider and bring up all of your concerns. The sooner you get diagnosed, the sooner you can begin treatment. Cancers caught early have a much better chance of successful treatment.