



Cancer Awareness

Our aim is to promote education and raise awareness about cancer.

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What is **Cancer** ?



Cancer is caused by mutations in the genes responsible for regulating the growth of cells.

Normally, cells in our bodies constantly undergo cell growth –new cells take over as old ones die.

Mutations, however, gives some of these cells the ability to keep dividing uncontrollably, producing more cells just like it and forming a tumor.

Early detection of cancer greatly increases the chances for successful treatment. It is important to know what factors may put you or your loved ones at a higher risk of certain types of cancer. Accordingly, you can then take the necessary precautions and possibly detect the cancer early on.

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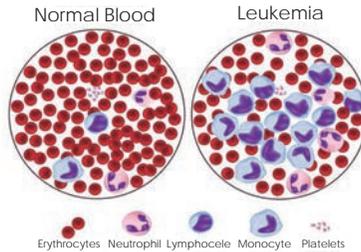
	Age	Common Cancer
Children	1-17	Leukemia
Men	18-49	Lung
		Esophagus
		Mouth
	50-70	Lung
		Prostrate
Women	18-49	Breast
		Thyroid
	50-70	Breast
		Cervix
Men & Women	18-70	Colorectal (Bowel)

Please note the above chart is not an exhaustive compilation. It only shows some of the most common types of cancers that may affect a person based on their age and gender.

Risk factors & symptoms for common types of cancers

Leukemia

Leukemia is cancer of the blood and bone marrow. Childhood acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL) is at present the most common type of cancer in children. ALL occurs when the bone marrow produces a large number of immature lymphoblasts. These immature dividing cells fill up the bone marrow and stop it from making healthy blood cells.



Symptoms include:

- Fever
- Easy bruising or bleeding
- Frequent or severe nosebleeds
- Bleeding gums
- Flat, pinpoint, dark-red spots under the skin caused by bleeding
- Bone or joint pain
- Painless lumps in the neck, underarm, stomach, or groin
- Loss of appetite, weight loss
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Pain or feeling of fullness below the ribs
- Weakness, feeling tired, or looking pale
- Loss of appetite
- Feeling dizzy or light-headed
- Headaches, seizures, vomiting
- Recurring infections

Risk factors include:

- Family history
- Exposure to radiation

What you can do

It should be noted that many of the symptoms of childhood leukemia can have other causes as well, and most often these symptoms are not caused by leukemia. However, it is important to have these symptoms checked by a doctor in order to determine the cause and get treatment, if needed.

Breast Cancer

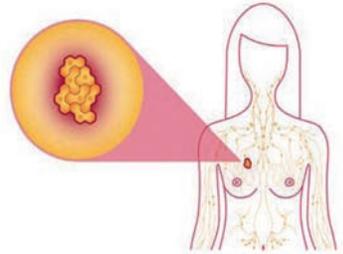


Breast cancer occurs when cells that are in the breast begin to grow out of control. These cells then go on to usually form a tumor. This tumor is cancerous if the cells can grow and invade surrounding tissues or spread (metastasize) to distant areas of the body.

Breast cancer can occur in both men and women however, it is found more often in women.

Symptoms include:

- A lump or thickening in an area of the breast
- A change in the size, shape or feel of a breast
- Dimpling of the skin
- A change in the shape of your nipple, particularly if it turns in, sinks into the breast, or has an irregular shape
- A blood stained discharge from the nipple
- A rash on a nipple or surrounding area
- A swelling or lump in your armpit



Risk factors include:

- Being a woman; breast cancer in men occurs much less frequently
- Getting older; as you get older, your risk of developing breast cancer goes up. Risk increases for women of ages 45 or older
- Having a family history of breast cancer
- Having a personal history of breast cancer
- Starting menstruation (periods) before age 12
- Going through menopause after age 55
- Exposure to radiation
- Drinking alcohol
- Being overweight or obese
- Birth control -oral contraceptives
- Hormone therapy after menopause

What you can do

The earlier breast cancer is diagnosed, the easier it is to treat and the better the chance of curing it.

It is important to be aware of how your breasts normally look and feel at different times of the month. If you notice a change that isn't normal for you, talk to your doctor.

It is not necessary to examine your breasts every day or every week. But it is important to know how your breasts normally feel, and how that changes with your periods. Some women have lumpier breasts around the time of a period. If this is the same in both breasts, don't worry. But check your breasts again the following month, a few days after your period is over. If the lumpiness comes and goes with your menstrual cycle, it may not be a cause for concern.

One of the simplest methods to check your breasts is in the shower or bath. Run a soapy hand over each breast and under your arm. Five awareness points:

- Know what is normal for you
- Look and feel
- Know what changes to look for
- Report any changes without delay
- Have your breasts screened if you are aged 50 or over

These signs don't necessarily mean you have cancer. However if you experience anything that is not normal, it is advisable that you consult your doctor.



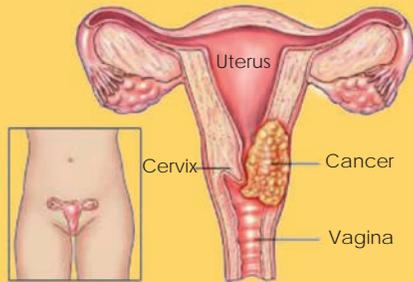
Cervical Cancer



Cervical cancer occurs when abnormal cells in the cervix grow out of control. The cervix is the lower part of the uterus that opens into the vagina. It is usually found at a very early stage through a Pap test. Most cervical cancer is caused by a virus called human papillomavirus, or HPV.

Symptoms include:

- Abnormal vaginal bleeding -bleeding after vaginal intercourse, bleeding after menopause, bleeding and spotting between periods, and having (menstrual) periods that are longer or heavier than usual. Bleeding after douching or after a pelvic exam may also occur.
- Pain in the lower belly or pelvis.
- An unusual discharge from the vagina – the discharge may contain some blood and may occur between your periods or after menopause.
- Pain during intercourse.



Risk factors include:

- Human papilloma virus (HPV) infection
- Being overweight
- Having a family history of cervical
- Smoking cancer
- Multiple full-term pregnancies
- Chlamydia infection -past or current infection
- Long-term use of birth control pills

What you can do

These signs and symptoms can also be caused by other factors. For example, an infection can cause pain or bleeding.

However, if you have any of these signs or other symptoms, it is advisable to consult your doctor without delay.

Cervical Cancer - guidelines for the prevention and early detection of cervical cancer:

- Women between the ages of 21 and 29 should have a Pap test done every 3 years
- Women between the ages of 30 and 65 should have a Pap test plus an HPV test (called co-testing) done every 5 years or have a Pap test done every 3 years
- Women over the age of 65 who have had regular cervical cancer testing in the past 10 years with normal results should not be tested for cervical cancer
- Women with a history of serious cervical pre-cancer should continue to be tested for at least 20 years after diagnosis, even if testing goes past the age of 65



Oral Cancer



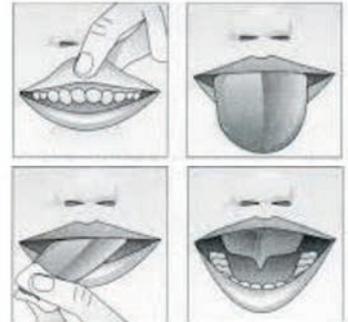
Mouth cancer, also known as oral cancer, is where a tumor develops on the surface of the tongue, mouth, lips, cheeks or gums.

Mouth cancer is more common in men than in women.

Self-Exams

Symptoms include:

- Red or white patches on the lining of your mouth or tongue
- Ulcers on your mouth or tongue
- A lump on your mouth or tongue



Risk factors include:

- Smoking or using products that contain tobacco
- Drinking alcohol
- Infection with the human papilloma virus (HPV)
- Betel leaf, hunuand areca nut chewing
- Poor nutrition
- Weakened immune system

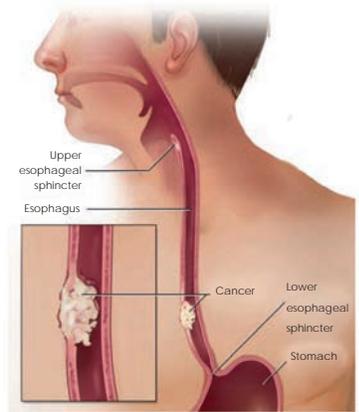
What you can do

Many pre-cancers and cancers of the oral cavity and oropharynx can be found early, during routine screening exams by a dentist, doctor, dental hygienist, or by self-exam. Some dentists and doctors recommend that you examine your mouth in a mirror every month to check for any abnormal areas.

You should consult your doctor if the above symptoms do not heal within three weeks, especially if you're a heavy drinker or smoker.

Esophageal Cancer

The esophagus is a muscular tube that moves food and liquids from the throat to the stomach. Cancer of the esophagus starts in the inner layer of the esophagus and grows outward.



Symptoms include:

- Difficulty swallowing
- Persistent indigestion or heartburn
- Bringing up food soon after eating
- Loss of appetite and weight loss
- Pain or discomfort in your upper stomach, chest or back

What you can do

The successful treatment of esophageal cancer varies depending on things such as how far it has spread, your age and your general health. If it is detected while it is in the early stages, there is a greater chance of curing it. However, esophageal cancer doesn't show any early signs or symptoms. Therefore, it has often spread quite far by the time it is diagnosed.

Risk factors include:

- Age -the chances of getting esophageal cancer are more common in persons 55 years or older. Less than 15% of cases are found in people younger than age 55.
- Gender -men are more than 3 times as likely as women to get esophageal cancer.
- Gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) -in many people, reflux causes symptoms such as heartburn or pain that seem to come from the middle of the chest. However, in some cases, reflux does not cause any symptoms at all.
- Tobacco and alcohol use
- Obesity
- Injury to the esophagus –such as accidental ingestion of chemicals such as lye.
- Human papilloma virus (HPV) infection



Lung Cancer



Lung cancer is the uncontrolled cell growth in tissues of the lungs. These cells do not develop into healthy lung tissue, they divide rapidly and form cancerous tumors. There are two main types of lung cancers –small-cell lung carcinoma (SCLC) and non-small-cell lung carcinoma (NSCLC).

Symptoms include:

- A recurring cough
- Chest pain that is often worse with deep breathing, coughing, or laughing
- Hoarseness
- Weight loss and loss of appetite
- Coughing up blood or rust-colored sputum (spit or phlegm)
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling tired or weak
- Recurring infections such as bronchitis and pneumonia
- New onset of wheezing



Risk factors include:

- Tobacco smoke
- Exposure to asbestos
- Exposure to other cancer-causing agents in the workplace
- Other carcinogens (cancer-causing agents) found in some workplaces that can increase the risk of developing lung cancer
- Inhaled chemicals or minerals such as arsenic, beryllium, cadmium, silica, vinyl chloride, nickel compounds, chromium compounds, coal products, mustard gas, and chloromethylethers
- Diesel exhaust
- Air pollution
- Arsenic in drinking water
- Previous radiation therapy to the lungs
- Personal or family history of lung cancer

What you can do

Most of the symptoms of lung cancer are more likely to be caused by something else. However, if you do have cause to suspect your symptoms could be lung cancer, it's important to go see your doctor.

The danger is that lung cancer may not usually cause symptoms until the cancer is already advanced and incurable. That is why screening (looking for lung cancer in people who do not have any symptoms) is encouraged for those who are at a higher risk of developing lung cancer, such as people with a long history of smoking. The earlier the cancer is detected, the higher the chances are of it being successfully treated.

Guidelines for lung cancer screening

Persons who meet the following criteria may be candidates for lung cancer screening:

- 55 to 80 years old
- In fairly good health
- Have a history of heavy smoking
- Smoker or person who has quit smoking within the last 15 years.

Colorectal Cancer

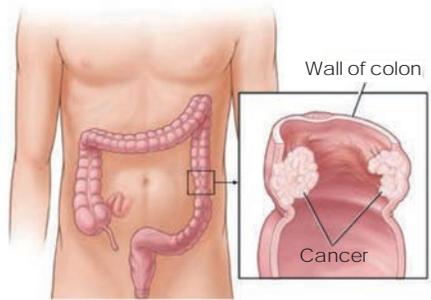
(Bowel)



Colorectal cancer is a malignant growth that develops most commonly in the lining of the large bowel. Most colorectal cancers develop from tiny growths called 'polyps'. Not all polyps become cancerous.

Risk factors include:

- Being overweight or obese
- Certain types of diets
- Smoking & heavy alcohol use
- Older age
- Personal history of inflammatory bowel disease
- Family history of colorectal cancer or adenomatous polyps
- Type 2 diabetes



Symptoms include:

- Change in bowel movement habits or appearance
- Blood in the stool or rectal bleeding
- Frequent gas pain, cramps
- A feeling that the bowel has not emptied completely
- Unexplained anemia
- Rectal/anal pain or a lump in the rectum/anus
- Abdominal pain or swelling
- Weight loss

What you can do

In its early stages, bowel cancer often has no symptoms. It must be noted that not everyone who experiences these symptoms has bowel cancer. Other medical conditions and some foods or medicines can also cause these changes. If you are experiencing any of these symptoms for more than two weeks, consult your doctor.

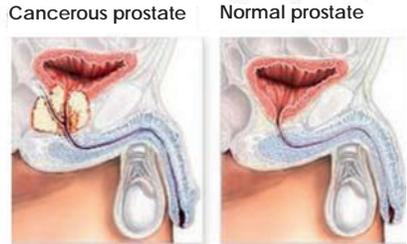
Both men and women from the age of 50 are at a higher risk of developing colorectal cancer –they should use one of the screening tests below:

Tests that find polyps and cancer

- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- Colonoscopy every 10 years
- Double-contrast barium enema every 5 years
- CT colonography(virtual colonoscopy) every 5 years

Prostate Cancer

The prostate is a gland in the male reproductive system, therefore only affects men. The walnut-sized gland is located beneath the bladder and surrounds the upper part of the urethra, the tube that carries urine from the bladder. Prostate cancer begins when cells in the prostate gland start to grow uncontrollably.



Symptoms include:

- Problems urinating including a slow or weak urinary stream or the need to urinate often, especially at night
- Blood in the urine or semen
- Trouble getting an erection (erectile dysfunction)
- Pain in the hips, back, chest or other areas
- Weakness or numbness in the legs or feet

Risk factors include:

- Age –prostate cancer is rare in men younger than 40, but the chance of it developing rises rapidly after age 50. About 6 in 10 cases of prostate cancer are found in men older than 65.
- Family history
- Chemical exposure

What you can do

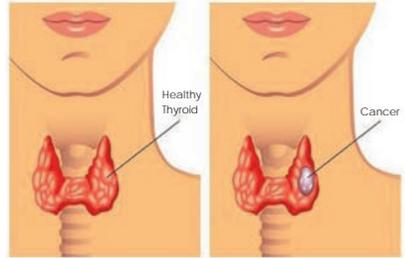
The symptoms are more likely to be caused by something other than prostate cancer. However, it is important to consult your doctor if you have any of these symptoms in order for the cause to be determined and treated, if needed.

Prostate cancer in the early stages generally cause no symptoms. More advanced prostate cancers sometimes cause symptoms. Therefore, it is important to consult your doctor if you notice worrying symptoms. Men who are a higher risk (genetic predisposition or strong family histories of prostate cancer) should start screening once they reach the age of 40 years.

Thyroid Cancer



The thyroid gland is a butterfly shaped gland located in the front of your neck. It produces hormones that regulate growth and the rate of chemical reactions in the body. Thyroid cancer is caused by abnormal cell growth in the thyroid gland.



Symptoms include:

- Painless lump or swelling that develops in the neck
- Unexplained hoarseness that lasts for more than a few weeks
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- A lump elsewhere in your neck

Risk factors include:

- Gender : occurs about 3 times more often in women than in men
- Age: can occur at any age but there is a higher risk for women aged 40-50 years and men aged 60-70 years
- Family history
- High levels of growth hormone
- A diet low in iodine
- Radiation exposure; such as radiation from certain medical treatments

What you can do

Many cases of thyroid cancer can be detected in the early stages, increasing the chances of successful treatment. If you experience any of the described symptoms, consult your doctor. It must however be noted that these symptoms are not always caused by thyroid cancer. There is no recommended screening test to detect thyroid cancer early. You are generally advised to have your neck examined twice a year to look and feel for any growth or lumps.

Take Control

Finding and treating cancer at an early stage can save your life. Cancer that is diagnosed at an early stage, before it's had the chance to spread is more likely to be treated successfully. If the cancer has spread, treatment becomes more difficult, and a person's chances of survival is much lower.

It is important to be aware of any changes in our bodies and report them promptly to a doctor. What is important to keep in mind is that just like any other disease, there are treatments available for cancer.

Be aware and proactive in knowing the risk factors and identifying the early symptoms.

If you have a higher risk of developing certain types of cancers (genetic predisposition, family history), it is important you get screened even if you don't show any symptoms yet.

Treatment Centres in Sri Lanka by type and speciality:

- 1** National Cancer Institute
Cancer Hospital Road, Maharagama
- 2** Tellippalai Trail Cancer Hospital
Tellippalai, Jaffna
- 3** Kandy Teaching Hospital
- 4** Cancer Early Detection Centre
Ministry of health, Elvitigala Mw, Col -05
- 5** Lanka Hospitals
578, Elvitigala mw, Col -05
- 6** Ceylinco Diabetes Centre
No.60, Park St, Col -02
- 7** Cancer Hospital Karapitiya
Maitipe 1st lane, Galle
- 8** Cancer Centre at PGH - Badulla
Provincial General Hospital, Badulla



Patient Care

Caring for a person with cancer may seem like an overwhelming task at first. We'd like to offer some advice about how best to support your loved ones battling this disease. Depending on the person's needs, you may provide different types of support, such as:

- Emotional support
- Help with medical care
- Assistance with financial and insurance issues
- Serve as the communicator between the patient and the health care team

If you are the main caregiver, help each team member express concerns, opinions, and emotions. Also, make sure that the person with cancer has a central role in all discussions and decisions, if possible. It is very important for the person with cancer to feel like an active member in their care.

Be proactive. Being proactive means taking charge and planning as much as possible to prevent last-minute emergencies. This can also help provide a sense of control and order.

Be a problem solver. To be a good problem solver, identify problems, find out what is needed, and follow through. Do not be afraid to seek advice and help from others. Look for creative solutions that work for you and the person you care for.

Try to stay positive. Having a positive attitude can help set the tone for all that you do. You may not have control of what happens to you, but you can

change how you react.

Caring for the emotional well-being of the person with cancer:

Communicate. One of the caregiver's most important jobs is to communicate openly with the person who has cancer.

Accept the limitations of a person who is seriously ill. A person who just received chemotherapy may not be able to taste a meal you worked hard to prepare. Or, a person on pain medication may not notice all of the small things you do.

Include the person with cancer in activities that provide meaning or pleasure. It is important to help the person stay connected to the world and to maintain a sense of normalcy.

Lower Your Risk

Take control of your health, and help reduce your cancer risk.

By following a healthy and active lifestyle, you will not only lower your risk of developing cancer but many other diseases as well. It is important to take care of your body and give it the nutrition it requires. Our bodies are capable of doing incredible things and we should take care of it as best as we can.

The list below includes the most-studied known or suspected risk factors for cancer. Limiting your exposure to them may lower your risk of developing certain cancers.

- Stay away from all forms of tobacco.
- Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
- Get moving with regular physical activity.
- Eat healthy with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Limit how much alcohol you drink (if you drink at all)
- Protect your skin and wear sunscreen.
- Know yourself, your family history, and your risks.
- Get regular check-ups and cancer screening tests.



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You can support the construction of the Galle.
Karapitiya cancer treatment facility

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Trailas One

Trail a charity walk that aims to raise funds for cancer treatment facilities in SriLanka.

It is also an effort to unite communities across the country.
Walk Unite Heal

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