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# Can Breast Cancer be prevented?

Oftentimes, individuals diagnosed with some form of cancer ask themselves and their physicians, "Could I have done something to prevent this?"

Women who are concerned about breast cancer also may wonder if they can prevent this potentially deadly disease, wondering if there is a pill, a vitamin or another method to keeping the cancer at bay. Unfortunately, there is no guaranteed way to prevent breast cancer. However, there are many different steps to take that may help reduce the risk for cancer or increase the odds that if breast cancer is present, it can be found at a more treatable stage.

There is no exact cause of breast cancer, but many experts agree that certain lifestyle choices as well as genetics can increase an individual's risk.

A woman's risk also increases as she ages. When a woman is in her 30s, her risk of developing breast cancer is roughly 4 out of 1,000. By the time she reaches her 60s, that risk has increased to 37 out of 1,000. Though women can't reverse the aging process, they can gain a greater understanding of additional risk factors for breast cancer and follow medical guidelines concerning breast cancer screenings.

\* **Family history:** Having a sister, mother, daughter or two or more close relatives with a history of breast cancer increases a woman's risk, particularly if these diagnoses were made when the relatives were under the age of 50. Such women should begin testing for breast cancer at an early age.

\* **Personal history:** If you've already experienced cancer in one breast or another part of your body, you are at an increased risk of getting cancer again. Breast cancer can turn up in the other breast or even in the same breast as before.

\* **Inheritance of genetic mutations:** Individuals with mutations in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes are much more likely to get breast cancer, says the National Cancer Institute. The risk also increases for colon or ovarian cancer. In normal cells, BRCA1 and BRCA2 help ensure the stability of the cell's genetic material and help prevent uncontrolled cell growth. Mutation of these genes has been linked to the development of hereditary breast and ovarian cancer. A simple blood test and a genetic work-up can point out mutations in these important genes.

\* **Race:** Although Caucasian

women are more likely to get breast cancer than black, Hispanic or Asian women, black women typically are more susceptible to an aggressive type of breast cancer called basal-like tumor. Limited access to healthcare can also increase the risk of cancer fatality regardless of race.

\* **Childbearing age:** Women who first gave birth after age 30 have a greater chance of developing breast cancer than women who had children before reaching 30 years of age. Women who have never had children are also at a higher risk. Women who breast feed lower their risk for breast cancer.

\* **Hormones:** Women with a longer span of "high-estrogen years" are more at risk for breast cancer. This includes women who had their first menstrual cycle prior to age 12 and women who still were experiencing menopause after age 55. Anyone undergoing hormone-replacement therapy or participating in estrogen-raising therapies also has a higher risk of developing breast cancer. While many of these factors are out of your control, there are other risk factors that you can control.

\* **Alcohol consumption:** Avoiding or limiting alcohol consumption

can lower your risk for breast cancer. Drinking alcohol has been traced to higher estrogen levels in the body.

\* **Obesity:** Being overweight can also increase risk of developing breast cancer.

\* **Inactivity:** Failure to exercise can increase your risk. That's because regular exercise and a healthy diet contribute to the body's defense system, ensuring it is more capable of fending off disease.

\* **Tobacco products:** Use of cigarettes, cigars or chewing tobacco increases your risk for many different cancers.

\* **Infrequent doctor visits:** Routine physical check-ups by a general doctor or one who specializes in women's health can make the difference between an early breast cancer diagnosis, for which treatment is highly successful, or late-stage diagnosis, which is not as easily treated. Those who do not go for screenings put themselves at an elevated risk.

Breast cancer cannot be prevented, but there are many methods to reducing risk factors associated with the disease.



Although cervical cancer may garner the headlines and be the primary reason thousands of women visit their doctors each year for routine PAP tests, this cancer is not the most common cancer of the reproductive organs. Cancer of the uterus is more common than cervical cancer and ovarian cancer.

The National Cancer Institute says that more than 47,000 women will be diagnosed with uterine cancer in the United States in 2012 alone. Most women diagnosed with uterine cancer will be over the age of 55.

The majority of the cases of uterine cancer occur in the endometrium, the lining of the uterus, according to The Mayo Clinic. Uterine cancer and endometrial cancer are terms that are often used interchangeably. This cancer may start with polyps or fibroids that grow inside the uterus.

Because uterine cancer generally causes abnormal vaginal bleeding, pain and other symptoms, it can be diagnosed early when women visit their physician.

If a woman is beyond childbearing age, surgically removing the uterus often eliminates all of the cancer and is an effective means of treatment.



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# Five Most Deadly Cancers

*According to the Center for Disease Control*

Cancer has surpassed heart disease as the foremost cause of death for people in North America. A cancer diagnosis can be life-altering. Although there are many successful treatments for cancer, there is no definitive cure. Plus, certain cancers continue to be more ominous than others.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there are more than 100 types of cancer, characterized by their location in the body and abnormal cell growth in that area. Millions of dollars have been raised and spent on cancer research and finding new and innovative methods of treatment. Although the five-year survival rate for those with cancer in the United States has improved considerably over the last three decades, the National Cancer Institute still lists many cancers as the primary killers of many people. Here is the most recent classification of the five cancers that claim the most lives each year.

1. Lung cancer: Lung cancer is responsible for more deaths than any other cancer. Roughly 160,000 people succumb to lung and bronchial-related cancers each year. Although it is the most deadly, it is also the most preventable, as many cases of lung cancer are the result of certain lifestyle choices. Quitting smoking is the single most effective way to reduce your risk of lung cancer.
2. Colorectal cancer: In 2008, 52,857 Americans died from colorectal cancer, says the CDC. Most cases of colorectal cancer begin with groupings of small, benign cells called polyps that over time become cancerous. Screening is necessary to check for cancer of the colon and rectum, but because they are embarrassed and uncomfortable, many people avoid preventive measures.
3. Breast cancer: The second most common cancer in women, breast cancer can affect both sexes. It is also the most deadly cancer among women, with roughly 35 percent of the cases in the United States resulting in fatality.
4. Pancreatic cancer: The pancreas aids in digestion and metabolism. This cancer is deadly because it is difficult to detect in its early stages, as it does not always produce symptoms and the cancer tends to progress rapidly. Pancreatic cancer claims around 40,000 lives each year.
5. Prostate cancer: Prostate cancer is exclusive to men and is the second-leading cause of cancer deaths among them, according to the NCI. This type of cancer forms in the prostate, a gland that produces seminal fluid that carries sperm. It is estimated that 28,000 men will die from prostate cancer in 2012.

Although many cancers are fatal, survival rates are improving. Thousands of people diagnosed with cancer beat the odds and go on to live healthy, disease-free lives.

Although cervical cancer may garner the headlines and be the primary reason thousands of women visit their doctors each year for routine PAP tests, this cancer is not the most common cancer of the reproductive organs. Cancer of the uterus is more common than cervical cancer and ovarian cancer.

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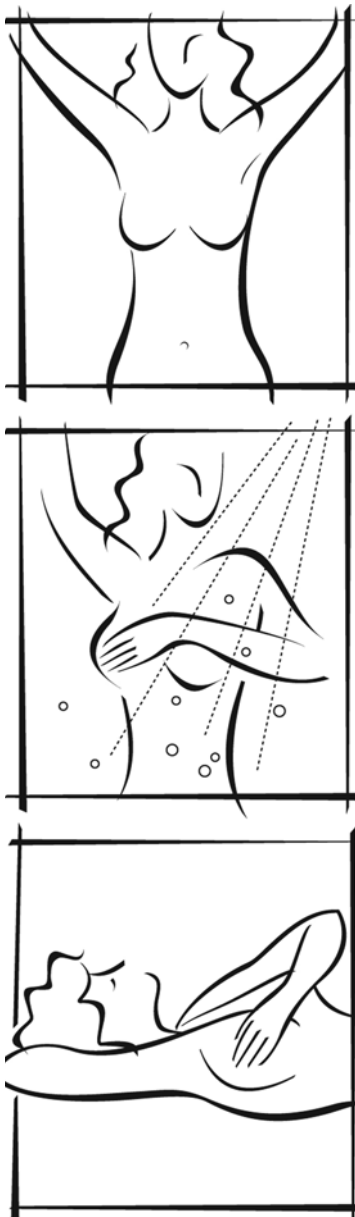
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# Exploring the different types of Breast Cancer



Breast cancer is a universal term to describe several different cancers that form in and around the breasts. Breast cancer types are generally categorized based on where the illness begins, most often in the ducts or lobules, the parts of the female anatomy responsible for producing breast milk.

About 226,870 new cases of invasive breast cancer in American women will be diagnosed in 2012.

The National Breast Cancer Foundation lists seven different types of breast cancer. Here's a look at them.

\* **Ductal carcinoma in-situ (DCIS):** This is an early form of breast cancer that refers to the presence of abnormal cells inside a milk duct in the breast. This type of cancer is generally found during mammograms and is considered non-invasive. This means it hasn't spread yet. This makes treatment for DCIS easier than for other forms of breast cancer.

\* **Infiltrating ductal carcinoma (IDC):** Also known as invasive ductal carcinoma, this is the most common type of breast cancer. According to BreastCancer.org, roughly 80 percent of all breast cancer cases are IDC. This cancer starts in the ducts, but "infiltrating" means that it spreads to the surrounding breast tissue. Over time, IDC can spread to the lymph nodes and possibly to other areas of the body.

\* **Medullary carcinoma:** This is a less common form of breast cancer. It is a type of IDC, but it gets its name from the color of the tumors, which are close to the color of brain tissue, or medulla. Medullary carcinoma is quite visible during mammograms because the cancer cells are large and form a barrier between healthy tissue and tumors.

\* **Infiltrating lobular carcinoma (ILC):** The American Cancer Society says that 1 in 10 women will be diagnosed with ILC, which originates in the milk-producing glands of the breast. In ILC, abnormal cells inside the lobule begin to divide and break through the wall of the lobule to invade the surrounding connecting tissues.

\* **Tubular carcinoma:** This is a common cancer for women ages 50 and older. When viewed under the microscope, tubular carcinoma cells have a distinctive tubular structure. There is a 95 percent survival rate for tubular carcinoma.

\* **Mucinous carcinoma (Colloid):** This is a rare condition in which the breast cancer cells within the breast produce mucus. The mucus and the cancer cells join together to form a jelly-like tumor. The tumors may feel like bumpy water balloons, but some are too small to detect with the fingers.

\* **Inflammatory breast cancer (IBC):** This is a rare and very aggressive type of breast cancer that causes the lymph vessels in the skin around the breast to become blocked. The cancer gets its name from the appearance of a swollen, red and inflamed breast.

Women are advised to get a baseline mammogram in their mid-30s and then annual mammograms starting at age 40. Early detection is generally vital for any form of cancer and is especially so for breast cancer.

## Symptoms of breast cancer

Breast cancer is a disease that claims the lives of so many people. Although many deaths cannot be prevented due to the severity and late stage of the breast cancer, early diagnosis goes a long way to improving mortality rates and sending individuals into remission faster. Knowing the symptoms of breast cancer can help women and men improve their chances of surviving the disease after diagnosis, as the earlier the disease is diagnosed, the better a person's chance at survival.

Not every person experiences symptoms of breast cancer. That's because, in its very early stages, breast cancer may not exhibit any symptoms or, if a tumor is present, it may be too small to detect during a breast self-exam. Furthermore, there are different types of breast cancer, each of which may have its own distinct symptoms. Some of these symptoms may mimic symptoms of more benign conditions as well, making it difficult to determine if symptoms are indicative of breast cancer or another ailment.

**But even though the following symptoms will not necessarily lead to a breast cancer diagnosis, it's still important to visit your doctor for further clarification if any of them appear.**

- \* swelling of all or part of the breast
- \* skin irritation or dimpling
- \* breast pain
- \* nipple pain or the nipple turning inward
- \* redness, scaliness or thickening of the nipple or breast skin
- \* a nipple discharge other than breast milk
- \* a lump in the underarm area
- \* changes in the size or symmetry of breasts
- \* presence of unusual lumps.

## What Is Cancer?

Cancer is a group of diseases characterized by uncontrolled growth and spread of abnormal cells. If the spread is not controlled, it can result in death. Cancer is caused by both external factors (tobacco, infectious organisms, chemicals, and radiation) and internal factors (inherited mutations, hormones, immune conditions, and mutations that occur from metabolism). These causal factors may act together or in sequence to initiate or promote the development of cancer.

Visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) - cancer facts and figures for 2012.



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# RISK FACTORS FOR BREAST CANCER

Breast cancer affects hundreds of thousands of families each year. A potentially deadly disease, breast cancer is associated with several risk factors. Some of those risk factors, including gender and age, are beyond an individual's control, while other risk factors are associated with certain lifestyle choices. But even if a woman has the risk factors for breast cancer, that does not mean she will get the disease. In fact, a woman can have several of the following risk factors and never get breast cancer, while other women can have just one of the risk factors and still get a breast cancer diagnosis.

Risk factors beyond your control such as, gender. Women are far more likely to develop breast cancer than men. The American Cancer says breast cancer is roughly 100 times more common among women than men. That's likely because men produce far less estrogen and progesterone, female hormones that can promote the growth of breast cancer cells.

An individual's risk for breast cancer increases as he or she ages. Roughly two-thirds of all invasive breast cancer cases are found in women over the age of 55, while just 13 percent of such cases are found in women younger than 45.

The ACS notes that roughly 5 to 10 percent of all breast cancer cases are believed to be hereditary. These cases result from mutations, or defects in a gene, inherited from a parent. In many cases a person will inherit a mutation in the BRCA1 and BRCA2 genes, which will normally prevent cancer by making proteins that keep the cells from growing abnormally. However, when these genes mutate, the risk for developing breast cancer is significant, as high as 80 percent for someone who has inherited mutated BRCA genes.

Women with a blood relative who has had breast cancer are also at greater risk of developing the disease. If a first-degree relative, which includes a mother, sister or daughter, has had breast cancer, a woman's risk roughly doubles. Having two such relatives who have had breast cancer triples a woman's risk.

White women are slightly more likely to develop breast cancer than African-American women. However, African-American women are more likely to die from the disease. Asian, Hispanic and Native American women have a lower risk of developing and dying from breast cancer.

Women with dense breast tissue, which is noticeable on a mammogram, have a higher risk of breast cancer. But dense breast tissue can make it harder for physicians to detect potential problems on a mammogram.

Women who began menstruating prior to age 12 and/or went through menopause after age 55 have a slightly higher risk of breast cancer. Researchers believe this is because these women had a longer lifetime exposure to estrogen and progesterone.

### Risk factors you can control.

Women who have never given birth or who gave birth for the first time after the age of 30 have a higher risk of developing breast cancer. Pregnancy reduces the total number of menstrual cycles a woman will have over her lifetime, which some feel is the reason that becoming pregnant can reduce a woman's risk.

Women who have used oral contraceptives, often referred to as birth control pills, have a higher risk of breast cancer than women who have never used them. But that risk returns to normal when a woman stops taking birth control.

Some research has linked breastfeeding with a slightly lower risk of developing breast cancer, especially among women who breastfeed for 11/2 to 2 years. However, breastfeeding for such a lengthy period is relatively uncommon, which has made the potential link between breastfeeding and a lower risk of breast cancer difficult to determine.

The ACS notes there is a clear connection between alcohol consumption and breast cancer risk. The more alcohol a woman consumes, the greater her risk for developing breast cancer. Women who consume two to five alcoholic beverages daily have roughly 11/2 times the risk of breast cancer as women who do not consume alcohol.

Women, especially those who are post-menopausal, who are overweight or obese have a greater risk of developing breast cancer. After menopause, most of a woman's estrogen comes from fat tissue, and a woman with more fat tissue will likely have higher estrogen levels, increasing her risk of breast cancer. Blood insulin levels also tend to be higher in overweight or obese individuals, and elevated blood insulin levels have been linked to some cancers, including breast cancer.

More and more evidence is piling up to suggest that exercise can reduce breast cancer risk. Studies vary as to how much exercise is necessary to reduce the risk, but the benefits of exercise are so numerous as to encourage women to be more physically active regardless of how much they may reduce their risk of developing breast cancer.

Breast Cancer Awareness Month has been celebrated each year since 1985, and many other breast cancer awareness initiatives have been devised since then. While the pink ribbon may seem like it's been in use for just as long, it was actually established only about 20 years ago.

Ribbons have long symbolized something important. For decades, yellow ribbons have been used to alert others to soldiers at war or hostages that hadn't yet come home. People often tie yellow ribbons around trees at home until their service men and women came home safely. During the height of HIV/AIDS activism and awareness, red ribbons were worn to symbolize support for those with the disease.

Although the pink ribbon evolved because pink expresses femininity, calm, health, and youth, the first breast cancer ribbon was actually peach. Charlotte Haley is credited with devising the first breast cancer ribbon in 1992. She was a breast cancer survivor and came from a family of women who also fought the disease. She created peach-colored loops at home and then distributed the ribbons at her local grocery stores. Haley encouraged people to wear the ribbons and contact legislators to demand more funding for breast cancer research.

Today you see waves of pink ribbons for Breast Cancer Awareness Month, many people don their ribbons year-round. Great strides have been made with respect to breast cancer, but with about 225,000 new cases popping up each year in the United States alone, there is still work to be done.

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# Breast Cancer NOT Just For Women

There are many people -- male and female -- who are completely unaware that men are susceptible to breast cancer. With preventative mammograms and messaging largely geared toward women, men may not even think about the breast cancer risk to themselves.

Although less prevalent among men, breast cancer is not exclusive to women. The American Cancer Society estimates that about 2,000 new cases of invasive breast cancer are diagnosed in men each year, and approximately 450 men die from breast cancer annually. Male breast cancers account for approximately 1 percent of all breast cancer cases.

To understand how men get breast cancer one must to know about the physical makeup of the

male body. Like women, men have breast tissue. Before boys or girls enter puberty, they have similar breast structures, including breast tissue and a few ducts under the nipple and areola. During puberty, female hormones further develop the milk ducts and lobules, or milk-producing glands. For males, testosterone levels increase during puberty, stalling further growth of breast tissue. However, what was already there remains, and in that tissue, cancerous cells can grow and multiply. There also are lymph nodes in the breast region and under the arms. Cancer cells can travel through the lymph nodes to other areas of the body.

Because men have considerably less breast tissue than women,

women, diagnosis of cancer can be easier. A lump in the breast is more noticeable on a man than on a woman. The American Cancer Society also lists a few other symptoms that could be indicative of breast cancer:

- \* lumps in the nipples or chest muscle.
- \* nipples turning inward.
- \* skin dimpling or puckering around the nipple.
- \* redness or scaling of the nipple or breast skin.
- \* discharge from the nipple.

Benign growths can be mistaken for breast cancer. Also, men can have a condition called gynecomastia, which is a non-cancerous breast tissue growth that may be mistaken for cancer. If any symptoms are present, they should be brought to the attention of a doctor for further investigation.

If it is breast cancer, treatment methods are largely the same among men and women. A combination of chemotherapy, radiation and surgery may be recommended depending on the stage and positioning of the cancerous tumors.

Although it is rare, breast cancer does occur in men. Therefore, guys should be aware of their bodies and the breast area and be on the lookout for any changes that could lead to problems.



## Risk Factors for Men

Though men are less likely to get breast cancer than other cancers, it still helps to understand certain aspects of the disease that can help lessen their risk and prepare them should they or a loved one be diagnosed.

When it comes to risk factors for breast cancer, men might have several risk factors but never develop the disease. Other men might have none of the risk factors but still develop breast cancer. Perhaps most puzzling, even if a man is diagnosed with breast cancer, doctors still can't be certain what exactly was the cause, even if the man has one or more of the risk factors associated with the disease. Similar to female breast cancer, many of the risks associated with male breast cancer are related to hormone levels. A man's risk of breast cancer increases as he ages, and the ACS notes the average age of diagnosis is 68.

A mutation in the BRCA2 gene accounts for roughly 10 percent of all breast cancers in men. While mutations in the BRCA1 gene can also cause breast cancer in men, the risk factor is far less. In addition, mutations in the CHEK2 and PTEN genes can also increase a man's risk for breast cancer.

Men with prostate cancer sometimes receive hormonal therapy that includes estrogen-related drugs. This can increase the risk of male breast cancer, but the ACS notes that risk is small compared to the benefits such treatments produce in slowing the growth of prostate cancer.

Men with Klinefelter syndrome, a congenital condition affecting roughly 1 in 1,000 men, have lower levels of androgens, or male hormones, and higher levels of estrogens, or female hormones, than most men. Some studies have found that men with Klinefelter syndrome are more likely to get breast cancer than other men, though both conditions are so uncommon that more research is needed to determine a more concrete link between the two.

Heavy alcohol consumption increases a man's risk for breast cancer. That's likely because of alcohol's effect on the liver, which plays a role in sex hormone metabolism. Men who abuse alcohol are much more likely to develop cirrhosis, and men who have cirrhosis commonly have higher estrogen levels because the liver is less capable of controlling hormonal activity.

**Male Breast Cancer Prevention.** Preventing male breast cancer can be difficult because there is no known cause. However, men who maintain a healthy weight and a healthy lifestyle are less likely to develop the disease. Maintaining an ideal body and restricting alcohol consumption are two steps all men should take to prevent breast cancer and other diseases as well.

Self-examination can also play a role in preventing male breast cancer. Men should never ignore a breast lump, as, similar to female breast cancer, male breast cancer can manifest itself in a lump on a man's breast. Men are often diagnosed with breast cancer much later than women, which could very well be because men are less likely to look for breast cancer than women.

Should anything suspicious appear, men should report it to their physician immediately, as early detection improves the chances that male breast cancer can be treated successfully.

Men can find more information about male breast cancer at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). For questions about your healthcare, always check with your physician or your healthcare professional.

## An Autumn of Comfort Foods Brown Barn Café



As we bid a fond farewell to a wonderful summer filled with heirloom tomatoes, sweet corn, yellow squash, barbequed chicken, smoked brisket and other delicious warm weather favorites, we look forward to an Autumn of

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# Routine checkup schedule for women

While there are many health screenings relevant to both men and women, there are also tests specific to each gender. Two of the more important routine screenings women should be aware of are regular mammograms and pap tests, which can both diagnose risk factors for certain types of cancer. A mammogram consists

of X-ray pictures of the breasts and is used to detect irregularities in breast tissue that may reveal the presence of cancerous tumors. Screenings also might detect microcalcifications that can sometimes indicate breast cancer as well.

The National Cancer Institute, recommend that women age

40 and over have a mammogram done every one to two years to help catch cancer early, which improves a woman's chance of survival. However, not every woman is routinely getting screened. In the United States, roughly 68 percent of women have gotten mammograms within the last two years, according to the CDC.

Although mammograms require small doses of radiation, which can cause cancer, to take the images, the benefits nearly always outweigh the risks. It is recommended that women age 35 to 39 get a baseline mammogram so they have an image of the healthy breast to which future mammograms can be compared.

A pap test, also known as a pap smear, is a diagnostic tool that checks for cellular changes in the cervix. The cervix serves as a barrier point between the vagina and the uterus.

The pap test is usually done in a gynecologist's office, although family practitioners also may administer it in their own offices. The doctor will insert a speculum into the vagina to widen the passageway so he or she can see the cervix. He or she then will take a

sample of cells from inside and outside the cervix and send them to a laboratory for testing.

The frequency of pap tests will be determined by the woman's age, results of prior pap tests, medical history, and history of the human papilloma virus, or HPV. Many women get annual pap tests starting at age 21 or when they first become sexually active.

To remain healthy, women are advised to keep up with routine physicals and tests that can help diagnose cervical and breast cancer in their early stages.

If lack of medical insurance is preventing a woman from being tested, she can contact the National Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program to find programs that offer free or low-cost pap tests to women in need.



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### Important health screenings for men

Health screenings are important for men of all ages. Whether you're a young man, middle-aged or enjoying your golden years, screening tests are an important part of staying healthy. The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality offers the following screening test guidelines for men hoping to stay as healthy as possible as they age.

Men between the ages of 65 and 75 who have ever been smokers should speak with their doctor about a screening for abdominal aortic aneurysm. This condition is a bulging in the abdominal aorta, the largest artery in the body. Should an abdominal aortic aneurysm burst, this can cause dangerous bleeding and possibly even death.

Men should start being screened for colorectal cancer at the age of 50. For men with a family history of colorectal cancer, it might be a good idea to get screened before the age of 50. There are different ways to screen for colorectal cancer, and the doctor will likely discuss the best screening for each individual patient.

Blood pressure should be checked at least once a year starting at the age of 18. High blood pressure, which is 140/90 or higher, can lead to a number of life threatening ailments, including strokes, heart failure, heart attacks, and kidney or eye problems, so it's important for men of all ages to control their blood pressure and get regular screenings.

Men 35 years of age and older should have their cholesterol checked annually. Younger men who make certain lifestyle choices or have existing medical conditions should have their cholesterol checked starting at age 20. This includes young men who use tobacco, are obese, have diabetes, have a personal history of heart disease, or have a male family member who had a heart attack before age 50, or a female relative who had a heart attack before age 60.

Men should get screened for diabetes if their blood pressure is higher than 135/80 or if they take medication for high blood pressure.

Men concerned about depression should speak with their physician if they have felt down, sad or hopeless or if they have felt little interest or pleasure in doing things.

To learn more, visit [www.ahrq.com](http://www.ahrq.com). See your healthcare professional or physician for regular check-ups, tests and health care screenings.

## Signs and Symptoms that might indicate Cancer

Cancer is a disease so complex that even the most veteran of cancer researchers cannot fully explain the disease. Progress toward the diagnosis and treatment of cancer continues to be made, but there's still no telling if an individual will or won't get this potentially deadly disease.

One of the many things the medical community can say with certainty regarding cancer is that treatment is most effective when the cancer is found early. Melanoma skin cancer, for instance, can be easily removed if it's detected early and has not grown into the skin. In fact, the five-year survival rate, which indicates the percentage of people who live at least five years after diagnosis, for those whose melanoma skin cancer is detected early enough to remove the melanoma is nearly 100 percent. However, if that melanoma has already spread to other parts of the body by the time it's detected, the five-year survival rate is below 20 percent.

While the disparity between survival rates is not as severe for all cancers as it is for melanoma skin cancers, early detection is still imperative when it comes to beating cancer.

Part of the reason cancer is not always detected early is that it doesn't always make its presence felt until it has already reached an advanced stage. Pancreatic cancer, for instance, does not usually cause any noticeable symptoms in its early stages. Instead, the first noticeable signs of pancreatic cancer can be back or belly pain. At this point, the cells in the pancreas have grown and begun to press on nearby nerves and organs. While these might be the first signs of pancreatic cancer, by this point the cancer is typically at an advanced stage.

Still, knowing the signs and symptoms of cancer is a great way for men and women to catch the disease early when it's most treatable. Though the following signs and symptoms are not always indicative of cancer, their presence should be enough for adults to consult their physicians.

Extreme tiredness that does not improve even with ample rest could be a sign that cancer is growing. In certain cancers, including leukemia, this happens in the early stages. In addition, some colon or stomach cancers

cause blood loss, which can result in fatigue.

Early on, bone cancers or testicular cancer often manifest themselves through pain. Back pain can be a symptom of ovarian cancer or cancer of the colon or rectum. Unfortunately, when pain is a result of cancer, the cancer has already begun to metastasize.

One of the first signs of cancer might be the unexplained loss of 10 pounds or more. This is most common with cancers of the

pancreas, stomach, esophagus, or lung.

Cancers of the skin and other cancers can cause certain changes in the skin. Jaundice, when the skin and eyes turn a yellowish color, is one such change. The skin can also redden, itch or darken, a condition known as hyperpigmentation. Excessive hair growth on the skin is another skin change that might indicate the presence of cancer.

A common side effect of

cancer, fever most often happens after the cancer has metastasized. Cancers that effect the immune system often cause fever as the body finds it more difficult to fight infection. In certain blood cancers, including leukemia or lymphoma, fever is an early sign of cancer.

**Should any of the aforementioned signs or symptoms appear, men and women should consult their physicians immediately.**



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# Lung Cancer remains the deadliest of all Cancers

According to the National Cancer Institute, lung cancer will claim the lives of more than 150,000 Americans before the end of 2012. In Canada, where the national population is considerably smaller than that of the U.S., lung cancer will still take a heavy toll, causing more than 20,000 deaths according to the Canadian Cancer Society. Meanwhile, Cancer Research UK reports that within in the United Kingdom lung cancer accounts for roughly 6 percent of all deaths, and 22 percent of all deaths from cancer.

Each of these figures illustrates the prevalence of lung cancer across the globe, and the deadly toll it takes on an annual basis. While many are quick to assume they will be immune to lung cancer if they simply avoid smoking tobacco, the disease is much more complex than that and understanding it could mean the

difference between life and death.

What causes lung cancer? While the NCI reports smoking is the leading cause of lung cancer, that doesn't mean nonsmokers or those who quit smoking still aren't at risk. In fact, many additional factors can increase a person's risk of lung cancer.

Secondhand smoke has long been known to be very harmful, and no one, not even children, are immune to its effects. The American Cancer Society notes that, in the U.S. alone, roughly 3,000 nonsmoking adults will succumb to lung cancer each year because of secondhand smoke. Choosing not to smoke is a good decision, but being around smokers and breathing in their smoke could prove just as deadly as smoking. The less a person is exposed to tobacco smoke, the lower their risk for lung cancer.

Another risk factor for lung cancer is radon, a radioactive gas that cannot be seen, smelled or tasted. Radon forms in soil and rocks, and men and women who work in mines could be exposed to radon. Radon can also be found in homes when it pushes its way through cracks in floors or gaps around service pipes or in suspended floors. Testing a home for radon is inexpensive and won't take much time.

Additional causes of lung cancer include air pollution, asbestos and even age. Older people are more likely to be diagnosed with lung cancer, as are those with a family history of lung cancer.

Does lung cancer have symptoms? The deadliest form of cancer for men and women alike, lung cancer is perhaps so deadly because it does not often have many symptoms in its early stages. While some symptoms might

manifest themselves in the early stages, most will wait until the cancer begins to grow before they make their presence felt.

As the cancer grows, the following symptoms might appear:

- \* a cough that continues to worsen or won't go away
- \* constant chest pain
- \* coughing up blood
- \* a voice that grows hoarse
- \* frequent infections of the lungs, including pneumonia
- \* constant feelings of fatigue
- \* unexplained weight loss

Each of these symptoms can occur even if a person does not have lung cancer. However, men and women who experience any of the above symptoms should consult their physicians immediately.

How is lung cancer diagnosed? In many cases, individuals will experience one of the aforementioned symptoms of lung cancer and then visit their doctors. Such a visit should be made immediately, and men and women should expect certain tests to be performed upon visiting their doctor. In addition to ordering some blood work, a doctor will likely perform a physical exam to check for general signs of health and listen to breathing. During the physical, the doctor is likely to check for swollen lymph nodes, fluid in the lungs and a swollen liver.

A doctor will also order X-ray

pictures of the chest to detect if there are any tumors or an abnormal fluid buildup. A CT scan, which takes pictures of the tissue inside the chest, will likely be taken as well. These pictures can show if there is a tumor, abnormal fluid or swollen lymph nodes.

When determining if a patient has lung cancer, a doctor will also enlist the help of a pathologist to study cell or tissue samples. These cells or tissues can be collected in a number of ways, and a doctor might order more than one test.

Bronchoscopy - a thin, lighted tube is inserted through the nose or mouth into the lung, allowing a close exam of the lungs and the air passages that lead to them. A cell sample can be taken with a needle, brush or other tool.

Sputum cytology - Sputum, or thick fluid, is coughed up from the lungs and then checked for cancer cells.

Thoracentesis - a long needle is used to remove fluid called pleural fluid from the chest, and that fluid is then checked for cancer cells.

Thoracoscopy - a surgeon makes several small incisions in the chest and back, then looks at the lungs and nearby tissue with a thin, lighted tube.

More information about lung cancer is available from the National Cancer Institute at [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov).



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## What is the greatest risk of Radon Exposure?

Radon is a radioactive gas that can cause cancer. In fact, the Canadian Cancer Society notes that exposure to radon gas is among the leading causes of lung cancer in the country, alongside causes like smoking tobacco and exposure to asbestos. Similarly, the National Cancer Institute reports that exposure to radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the U.S., annually playing a part in 15,000-22,000 lung cancer deaths. As radon decays, it gives off tiny radioactive particles that are then inhaled. Upon inhalation, these particles begin to damage the cells than line the lungs. When exposure to radon is lengthy, men, women and children are at a greater risk for lung cancer.

Can a home be tested for radon? Fortunately, homeowners can have their homes tested for radon. Such tests are even inexpensive and rarely take more than a few minutes. The Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Surgeon General advise all homeowners to have their homes tested for radon, particularly any floors below the third floor. Professionals can come in and test a home, but many do-it-yourself radon testing kits are easy, reliable and inexpensive.

# Viruses have been linked to Cancer

Though it's difficult to determine a specific cause of cancer, the American Cancer Society notes that some forms of cancer are found more often in people who have been infected with certain viruses. Infection with the following viruses does not necessarily mean a person has cancer, but there does seem to be a connection between these viruses and cancer.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that human papillomavirus, or HPV, is the most common sexually transmitted virus in the United States. There are more than 40 types of HPV, and they can affect both men and women, though many people who have HPV do not know they have it. HPV has been linked to many different types of cancer, most notably cervical cancer. HPV has also been linked to cancers of the vagina, vulva, penis, and anus, and new research has suggested that HPV may be linked to cancers of the mouth, throat, head, and neck.

Often referred to as EBV, Epstein-Barr virus is a type of herpes virus and is one of the most common human viruses across the globe. EBV infection does not typically occur during childhood in developed countries, but children are not immune to the virus. Research has shown a link between EBV and nose and throat cancer, lymphoma of the stomach, Hodgkin's lymphoma, and Burkitt's lymphoma.

The Hepatitis B virus, known as HBV, causes Hepatitis B, an infectious and inflammatory illness of the liver. The Hepatitis C virus, or HPC, causes Hepatitis C, an infectious disease that can cause scarring of the liver and potentially cirrhosis. Both viruses have been linked to long-term liver infections, which can increase a person's risk of developing liver cancer.

Human herpes virus type 8, commonly referred to as HHV-8, is also known as Kaposi's sarcoma herpes virus. How the virus is contracted is not well understood, and infected individuals who are otherwise healthy may show no signs or symptoms of the virus. A healthy immune system can keep the virus in check, but those with suppressed immune systems are at high risk of infection. HHV-8 is linked with a type of cancer called Kaposi's sarcoma, though the majority of people with HHV-8 do not develop Kaposi's sarcoma unless they are also HIV-positive. When coupled with HHV-8 medications that weaken the immune system, such as those that may be prescribed after an organ transplant, may increase a person's risk of getting Kaposi's sarcoma.

# Diagnosing Gynecologic Cancer

Chances are someone you know may be diagnosed with a gynecologic cancer in her lifetime. Just what are these diseases, and what should one expect? Gynecologic cancer is a broad term that encompasses cervical, ovarian, uterine, vaginal, and vulvar cancers. As of 2006, the last year for which numbers were available, 76,515 women were told they had a gynecologic cancer and 27,848 died from one of these diseases.

For those uninformed about the different cancers that can plague women, here is a brief look at each of them.

Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable of the gynecologic cancers because screening is available through PAP tests. There is also a vaccine available to prevent human papilloma virus infections, which are known to contribute to the formation of cervical cancer.

Cervical cancer forms in the cervix, which is the bottom part of the uterus and connects to the vagina. While all women are at risk, those over the age of 30 are more likely to get cervical cancer. However, recovery is high, as the cancer is highly treatable.

More women die from ovarian cancer than any other type of gynecologic cancer. However, detecting cancer early allows for the best chance for successful treatment. Ovarian cancer produces symptoms, but many times they are mistaken for other conditions, such as irritable bowel, stress and depression. Symptoms may include abdominal pain and pressure, constipation, urinary urgency, loss of appetite, feeling full, and changes in menstruation. Women with any of these symptoms should visit a doctor to rule out other conditions. Although it can affect many age groups, 90 percent of those who experience ovarian cancer are over the age of 40.

Uterine cancer forms in the uterus, or the pear-shaped womb of the woman. This is where a baby forms and grows. Because the cancer generally takes hold in the lining of the uterus, it can be referred to as endometrial cancer.

No one is sure just what leads to uterine cancer, but there are some risk factors. Age is one of them; women over the age of 50 are more at risk. Also, women undergoing hormone replacement therapy for menopause or osteoporosis are at greater risk. Those who have had endometrial hyperplasia, or an increase in the number of cells in the lining of the uterus, are also at a higher risk for uterine cancer.

The vagina is the inner pathway to the uterus. The vulva is the outer part of the vagina that is protected by two folds of skin. Cancers in these parts of the body are very rare (1% and 5% respectfully).

Just as with cervical cancer, HPV may contribute to the formation of vaginal or vulvar cancers. Women should bring to doctors' attention any symptoms that seem irregular, such as unexplained itching, bleeding or lumps in these areas of the body.

Check with your physician, OBGYN or health care professional for questions concerning your health and well being.

Every 47 minutes, another woman in the United States is diagnosed with cervical cancer.



Cervical cancer affects thousands of women in North America. It begins in the cells of the cervix, essentially the gateway between the vagina and the uterus in the female reproductive system. Before cancer develops, abnormal cells in the cervix will develop. But there's more to know. Here are some facts about cervical cancer.

- \* Every 47 minutes, another woman in the United States is diagnosed with cervical cancer.
- \* The disease is caused by a sexually transmitted virus called HPV.
- \* There are rarely any symptoms of cervical cancer early on that can be detected by the average woman. That makes routine examination and testing by a doctor important.
- \* Cervical cancer is detected through a PAP test, where cells from the cervix are collected in the doctor's office and then examined in a lab.
- \* Most women diagnosed with cervical cancer are under the age of 50.
- \* All women who have been sexually active are at risk for cervical cancer.

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# Making a difference in the Lives of Children



Cancer touches the lives of many people, whether they are fighting the disease or supporting someone who is ill. Though it strikes more adults than kids, cancer can take hold in children -- a heart-breaking reality that often forces youngsters to grow up quickly. No stranger to the reality of childhood cancer, Alexandra Scott began selling lemonade to help fund finding a cure for cancer.

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States. Only heart disease is more prevalent. Although the National Cancer Institute says cancer is relatively rare among children ages 1 to 14, approximately 1,500 American children will die from the disease each year. The Children's Cancer Fund of America, Inc., states that 46 children are diagnosed with cancer every day.

The causes of childhood cancer are largely unknown and may be attributed to chromosomal abnormalities and ionizing radiation exposure. What is known is that cancers of the central nervous system and leukemias (blood cancers) account for more than half of all childhood cancers, according to NCI.

Despite the fact that cancer can prove taxing on the body and even fatal, a good percentage of children with cancer can become symptom-free and enter remission thanks to the ever-evolving treatment options. Researching and developing new treatments is an expensive endeavor, which is why foundations that help to raise money for cancer research have become essential in the fight against the disease.

Alex's Lemonade Stand was developed by a young girl who was diagnosed with neuroblastoma at age 1. Alexandra "Alex" Scott beat the odds many times, learning to walk with braces and meeting milestones doctors did not initially believe she would reach. However, at age 4 Alex learned that her tumors were growing again, and she was given a stem cell transplant. She vowed that when she got out of the hospital she would set up a lemonade stand to raise money and give the money to doctors to help other children with cancer -- just like the doctors who were helping her. The following year she held her first lemonade sale and raised \$2,000 for the hospital where she was treated.

Every year following Alex and her family set up lemonade stands in front of their house. News spread of their endeavors and others around the world decided to join in and have their own lemonade stands, where they would send the proceeds to Alex. In August 2004, Alex lost her battle with neuroblastoma at the age of 8. At the time of her death, Alex had raised more than \$1 million for pediatric cancer research. Alex's legacy lives on through the Alex's Lemonade Stand Foundation, which was established by her parents and siblings.

Since its inception, the foundation has raised more than \$55 million, some of which has funded cutting-edge research projects, helped with travel costs for families and children receiving treatment, and funded the development of further resources in cancer treatment.

Information about ALSF is available at [www.alexslimonade.org](http://www.alexslimonade.org).

Cancer claims millions of lives across the globe each year. No one is immune from cancer, though some people, either due to genetics or certain lifestyle choices, are at greater risk than others.

Among those with a low risk of developing cancer are children. Childhood cancer can occur, but it is generally rare. However, when cancer does strike in children, it comes in one of the two most common forms of leukemia or lymphoma. Leukemia begins in the blood-forming tissue and causes a large number of blood cells to be produced and enter the bloodstream. The disease lymphoma begins in the cells of the immune system.

Brain and spinal cord tumors are the third most common type of childhood cancer. Their cause is unknown, and the symptoms of childhood brain and spinal cord tumors vary from child to child. That said, it's important for parents to understand brain and spinal cord tumors so they can be better prepared should their children begin to exhibit any symptoms.

How does a brain or spinal cord tumor form? There are many types of brain and spinal cord tumors. But each type forms when there is an abnormal growth of cells. This abnormal growth can begin in different areas of the brain or spinal cord.

Are brain or spinal cord tumors benign or malignant? A tumor on the brain or spinal cord does not always indicate cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, some such tumors are benign. Benign tumors will grow and press on nearby areas of the brain, but these tumors rarely spread into other tissue.

Malignant brain tumors grow rapidly and spread into other brain tissue. As a malignant tumor grows into or presses on an area of the brain, that part of the brain it is growing into or pressing on may stop working as it's supposed to.

Whether a brain or spinal cord tumor is benign or malignant, some symptoms, including ones that are unpleasant, will occur, and the tumor will require treatment.

What are the symptoms of

childhood brain and spinal cord tumors? A tumor on the brain or spinal cord may cause uncomfortable symptoms for a child. However, the appearance of these symptoms does not necessarily mean a child has a brain or spinal cord tumor. The symptoms could be indicative of another condition.

Symptoms will also vary depending on where the tumor is. Symptoms of a childhood brain tumor include: morning headache, or headaches that go away after vomiting, frequent nausea or vomiting, vision, hearing and speech problems, loss of balance and difficulty walking, unusual sleepiness, change in activity level, unusual changes in personality or behavior, increase in head size (in infants), and seizures.

Symptoms of a childhood spinal tumor include back pain or pain that spreads from the back toward the arms or legs, difficulty urinating, a change in bowel habits, weakness in the legs trouble walking.

Children suffering from brain or spinal cord tumors may also be

unable to reach certain growth and development milestones. This includes sitting up, walking and talking in sentences.

How do doctors determine if a child has a brain or spinal cord tumor? There are several tests and procedures a doctor can employ to determine if a child has a brain or spinal cord tumor.

**Physical exam and history:** A doctor may perform an exam of the body to check for signs of disease, including lumps or anything out of the ordinary. The doctor will also want to know the child's medical history, include past illnesses and treatments.

**Neurological exam:** A neurological exam is a series of questions and tests to check the brain, spinal cord and nerve function. These tests will measure a child's coordination, his or her ability to walk normally and his or her mental status and will examine how well the muscles, senses and reflexes are working.

**Serum tumor marker test:** During this procedure, a doctor will take a blood sample to measure the amounts of certain substances

**Children continue on next page**

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released into the blood by organs, tissue or tumor cells. Certain substances are linked to certain types of cancer, so finding more of them in the bloodstream can help the doctor make a more accurate diagnosis.

**MRI with gadolinium:** This procedure will make a series of detailed pictures of the brain and spinal cord. The gadolinium is injected into the child's vein and will collect around the cancer cells so they appear brighter in the picture.

**CT scan:** A CTscan, or CAT scan, is a procedure that takes a series of pictures of areas inside the body. These pictures are detailed and taken from different angles.

**Angiogram:** This procedure focuses on the blood vessels and the flow of blood in the brain. A contrast dye is injected into the blood vessel, and as that dye moves through the vessel, pictures are taken to determine if there are any blockages.

**PET scan:** This procedure is looking for malignant tumor cells in the body. Some radioactive glucose is injected into the body, and the PET scanner rotates around the body, taking pictures of where the glucose is being used. Malignant tumors take up more glucose than normal cells, so tumor cells will show up brighter in the picture because they are more active.

What happens if a child is diagnosed with a brain or spinal tumor? The NCI notes that most childhood brain tumors are diagnosed and removed in surgery. A child's chance of recovery might be affected by a host of factors, including the type of tumor, the amount of cancer cells, if any, remaining after surgery, where the tumor was in the body, the child's age, and if the tumor was recurring or just diagnosed.

## Cancer staging helps indicate prognosis

As frightening as cancer can be, evidence indicates that the survival rate for most cancers is increasing and that many are beating the odds against this potentially devastating disease. Although it can be difficult to pinpoint just how "dangerous" a specific cancer case may be, a universal method of staging classification helps patients understand the severity of their cancers and their prognosis.

There are different staging systems for cancer, and they continually evolve over time as more information is learned about cancer and cell behavior. Physical exams, special imaging procedures, pathology reports, surgical reports, and other tests help to determine the stage of cancer.

Staging is important because it can help doctors plan appropriate treatments based on how far the cancer has advanced. However, while staging is an important indicator of how a cancer should be treated, it cannot predict the end result of a patient's battle with the disease. It also isn't foolproof because it requires human identification of cancerous cells intermixed with healthy cells. New, highly sensitive methods of staging are in development with the hopes that they can lead to better precision and better prognoses.

The most familiar cancer staging system uses Roman numerals (from 0 to IV) to describe tumors and the spreading of cancer cells in the body.

**Stage 0:** The first stage is commonly referred to as carcinoma "in situ," which is a Latin phrase meaning "in its place." These are very early-stage cancer cells that have not spread beyond their immediate location. They are usually very treatable.

**Stage I:** In this stage cancers are localized to one part of the body.

**Stage II:** This is a stage when cancers are considered locally advanced. They may have spread beyond their original location.

**Stage III:** This describes similar conditions to Stage II cancers but more advanced. There may be further spreading or tumors may be larger.

**Stage IV:** In this stage, cancer has spread to other locations throughout the body.

Another system that is widely used is TNM staging, which has been accepted by the International Union Against Cancer and the American Joint Committee on Cancer. Many medical facilities now use the TNM system as the main method to reporting on cancer. TNM stands for "Tumor, Nodes, Metastasis." An equation is created using these letters together with numbers to break down a cancer diagnosis more specifically. Here is the description, courtesy of the National Cancer Institute.

**Tumor (T), TX:** Primary tumor cannot be evaluated, **T0:** No evidence of primary tumor, **Tis:** Carcinoma in situ, **T1, T2, T3, T4:** Size and/or extent of primary tumor, **Regional Lymph Nodes (N), NX:** Regional lymph nodes cannot be evaluated, **N0:** No regional lymph node involvement, **N1, N2, N3:** Involvement of regional lymph nodes, i.e. number of nodes affected and extent of spread, **Distant Metastasis (M), MX:** Distant metastasis cannot be evaluated, **M0:** No distant metastasis, and **M1:** Distant metastasis is present

Cancer staging can help save lives and provide reassurance to patients. While it's not a foolproof method, it is one internationally recognized and used to be sure the best treatment options are provided.

## TREATMENT CENTERS

Each year, U.S. News and World Report investigates cancer facilities across the United States and shares their findings based on reputation, staff and number of fatalities.

### M.D. Anderson Cancer Center

This facility, located in Houston, TX, is rated one of the best cancer hospitals in the country for all patients, but it is also highly prized for its pediatric center.

### Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center

Based in New York City, this center routinely takes on tough cases of cancer. It also houses the top pediatric cancer program in the country.

### Johns Hopkins Hospital

Located in Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins Hospital is well known as a top provider of cancer care, and it also ranks highly in many other medical specialties for adults.

### The Mayo Clinic

This facility is prized as one of the top teaching hospitals in the world. Located in Rochester, MN, the Mayo Clinic is also a premier hospital for receiving top cancer care.

### Dana-Farber Cancer Institute

This is an affiliate of Harvard Medical School and is located in Boston, MA.

### University of Washington Medical Center

The vast majority of surveyed patients who have received treatment at this facility have said they would recommend the hospital.

### Massachusetts General Hospital

Residents of Boston have not one but two premier cancer facilities at their disposal. Alongside Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, Massachusetts General Hospital is also a top-ranked facility.

### University of California, San Francisco Medical Center

This hospital received high marks in patient satisfaction and nursing care.

Survival rate and cancer patient satisfaction may depend on the type of facility individuals choose for treatment.

There are many well-known and other-rated facilities across North America.

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