

Cancer

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The medical term for cancer is *malignant neoplasm*, and each form shares in common one trait: uncontrolled cell growth that can

invade other parts of the body and often lead to severe health problems, including death.

Racial and Ethnic Disparities

Some sexes, races, and ethnic groups are more vulnerable cancer than others. For example, males generally have higher rates of cancer than females, with black men having the highest rate of incidence as well as death. In women, white females have the highest rate of incidence, while black females have the highest death rates. Hispanics of both sexes and all racial origins are often not that far behind in developing cancer.

In terms of specific kinds of cancer, men tend to die more from prostate, lung, and colorectal cancer. Breast cancer is a leading killer of women rather than men, but lung and colorectal cancer are also prevalent among women.

Causes and Origin

What causes any kind of cancer varies from person to person, and sometimes cannot be determined. Some-



times, several different factors can play a role. Unlike many other diseases, the vast majority of cancer cases are non-hereditary (aka non-genetic) and come mostly from environmental and lifestyle factors. To a lesser degree, other diseases - such as HPV, hepatitis B and C, and some bacterial infections - can also lead to cancer.

Poor diet, a lack of physical activity, and excess body weight are the most common contributors to cancer, accounting for 14 to 20% of all cancer deaths in the US. Some studies find an even higher proportion of cancer resulting from these factors. It's been found that reducing the consumption of red meat and processed foods, while eating a healthier diet made up of more fruits, whole grains, and vegetables can lower your risk considerably.

More exercise and a healthy weight can also go a long way in reducing cancer rates, as obesity has been linked to several types of cancer. The use of tobacco is also a major contributor, which is why lung cancer is one

of the biggest killers in the US. Stopping your smoking habit could greatly reduce your risk, and is better for your overall. Other factors include exposure to radiation, such as UV rays from the sun, and exposure to cancer-causing agents like asbestos and certain industrial wastes.

Though not always preventable, your chances of getting cancer can be greatly reduced by living a healthy lifestyle and avoiding dangerous substances. Learn more at <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/index.htm>

HIGHLIGHTS

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