

Cancer awareness



How do I prevent cancer?

Research has uncovered many habits that have been associated with an increased risk of cancer. Creating and committing to healthy habits can lower your risk of getting cancer and improve your cancer journey if you already have a cancer diagnosis.



Stop smoking

Cigarettes contain hundreds of toxins that have been linked to lung and oral cancers. Smoking is not conducive to healthy airways, blood vessels and the immune system.

Reduce alcohol intake

The breakdown products of alcohol have been linked to cancers in the liver and pancreas. It has often been quoted that alcohol in moderation (a glass a day) is good for your heart - current research is beginning to question this position.

Eat a healthy balanced diet

Greens, fruit and vegetables as well as vitamins and minerals are the cornerstone of healthy living for all health conditions. Cut down on fatty foods as well as processed foods.

Manage your weight

Obesity is the single most important risk factor for cancers as well as cardiovascular diseases. Being overweight increases your risk of breast, prostate and colon cancers.

Exercise

Moderate and high intensity workouts have been shown to improve health outcomes, including in cancer patients. Physical exercise for 20-30 minutes, three times a week, contributes to physiological changes that favour a healthy heart, lungs and many other organs.

Vaccinate

The HPV vaccine is recommended for boys and girls between the ages of 11-26. It protects against the virus HPV, which causes genital warts, and is a common precursor for cervical and vaginal cancers. Some medical aid schemes pay for this benefit.





How do I screen for cancer?

Cancer is an insidious disease, meaning it develops silently and is often picked up when it has advanced. For this reason, the best way to pick up early cancers is through regular screenings. There are multiple screening tests available through your healthcare provider and encouraged by your medical aid scheme.



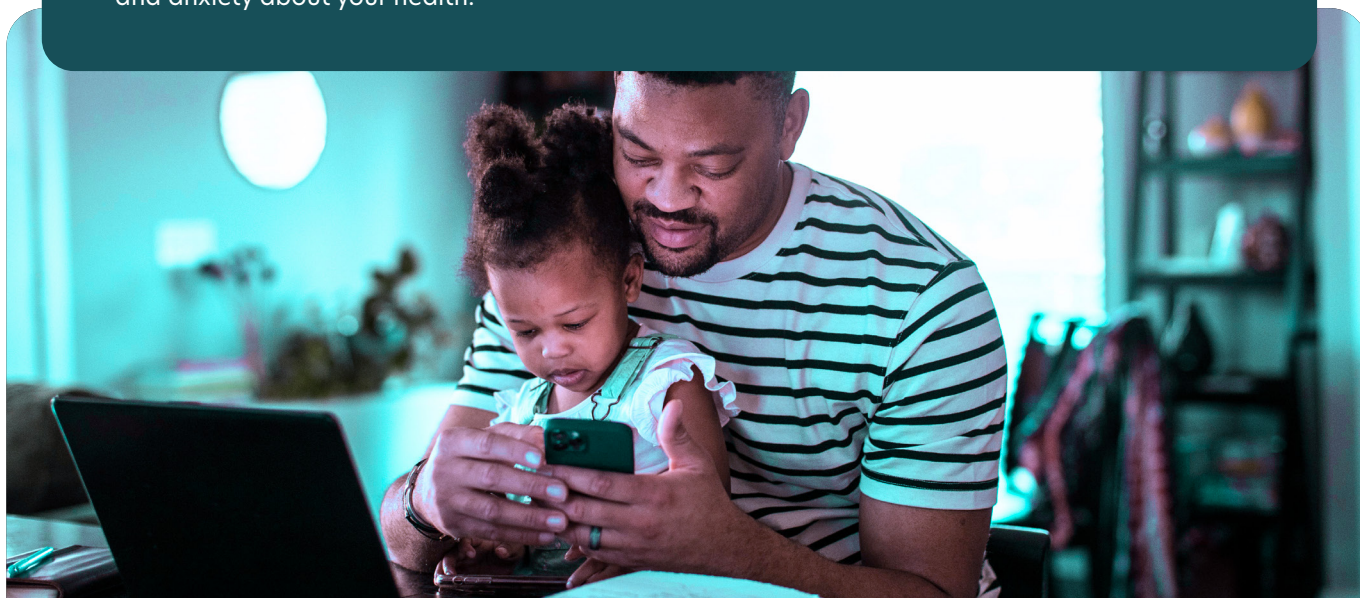
Here's what you can do:

- **Examine** your own breasts every month to look for lumps and any other abnormalities.
- **Go for annual general check ups** with your primary healthcare provider such as your doctor. This check up will include a breast exam, prostate exam, check your skin and other parts of the body for abnormalities that may require further tests.
- **Have a pap smear.**
- **Depending on your age or symptoms**, blood tests, a mammogram and a colonoscopy may be indicated as screening tests. The frequency may vary based on your risk factors, family history or symptoms.



What do I do when I suspect something is wrong?

Should you pick up abnormalities with your health that you are uncertain of or concerned about, consult with your primary healthcare provider such as your doctor. They are best-placed to assess and refer you to the most appropriate specialist where necessary. Act quickly to alleviate stress and anxiety about your health.



What should I do if I am diagnosed with cancer?

A cancer diagnosis may be quite lengthy and involve multiple consultations or even procedures.

- 1 **Bring along a family member or a friend** who can help you to listen and ask questions.
- 2 **Read up as much as you can** on the condition that you are being investigated for or diagnosed with in order to prepare you to ask the necessary questions.
- 3 **Ask for a relevant contact number** for any queries you might have in-between consultations.
- 4 **Make sure to access credible sources of information** instead of general internet content. Your doctor's rooms often have pamphlets. Otherwise, ask them for referrals.
- 5 **Make use of your EAP provider** for counselling and have an independent counsellor who can help you with perspective and coping skills.
- 6 **If your diagnosis is confirmed**, your medical aid scheme will provide you with an information pack and contact details for the cancer support centre where you can enquire about your benefits.
- 7 **Continue with a healthy diet and exercise.** Discuss your routine with your doctor in order to modify the areas that require some adjustments.
- 8 **Look after your mental and physical well-being**, and keep your connections close. A cancer journey may be long and lonely. Those with social and family connections, who maintain some regular contact with others, have been shown to improve and cope better than those who isolate themselves.
- 9 **Communicate with your loved ones, friends, employer** and any other persons who depend on you. As soon as you are ready, enable the people around you to adjust and accommodate expectations. This will help to avoid unnecessary conflict and may earn you a lot of support that you had not anticipated.
- 10 **Ensure that you comply with your appointments and medication.**



How do I support a loved one with cancer?

There are countless small ways to show up for each other. Cancer often has very difficult treatments that will have a debilitating effect on your loved one. You may choose to be a present help such as driving them to their appointments, cooking a meal for or with them. You may also choose to assist with household responsibilities such as the laundry, gardening or running errands.

There are many big things too, that you may offer. Allow yourself the time to observe and ask about the needs that you are happy to fill.



Close the gap for yourself and your loved ones by caring about cancer!