

Cancer in Men

You can get cancer at any age, but it is more likely as you get older. The types of cancer people get and the risk of dying from cancer are not the same for all ethnic groups. Here are a few of the most common types of cancer in men and what you can do to help prevent them or find the cancer early.

Lung cancer

Lung cancer is one of the most common cancers in men in the US. Most men who get lung cancer are over age 65. Lung cancer is the leading cause of death from cancer for men. Most men who die from lung cancer are or were cigarette smokers. To help protect yourself:

- If you smoke, try to quit. If you quit smoking, you are less likely to get lung cancer. Talk to your provider if you need help quitting.
- Encourage anyone you live with to quit, too. Secondhand smoke increases your risk of lung cancer.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have a cough that does not go away or a cough that brings up blood.

Screening exams for lung cancer may include a low-dose CT scan of the chest or a chest x-ray. A low-dose CT scan uses less radiation than a typical CT scan and you do not need an IV with a special dye for this test. If you are age 55 or older and you smoke, or you have smoked, ask your healthcare provider about your risks for lung cancer and if you should have a low-dose CT scan or a chest x-ray.

Prostate cancer

The prostate gland is part of a man's reproductive system. It is about the size of a walnut. It is located inside your body, between the bladder and the penis. The prostate makes fluid that nourishes sperm and helps carry it out of the body during sex.

Prostate cancer is one of the most common cancers in men in the US. Most men who get prostate cancer are over age 65. Although prostate cancer is a serious disease, most men diagnosed with prostate cancer do not die from it. Healthcare providers have not found a clear link between prostate cancer and risks factors such as diet, smoking, infections, or being overweight. Studies suggest that if you eat a diet high in red meat and fat, you have a higher risk. Eating a healthy diet and getting regular exercise may reduce your risk of prostate cancer, for example:

- Eat more fruits and vegetables, less meat, and choose low-fat foods.
- Researchers have not yet found dietary supplements or other things you might do to try to protect yourself against prostate cancer. Various things are being studied, such as selenium, vitamin E, lycopene (a chemical found in tomatoes), and medicines that help shrink an enlarged prostate gland.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have changes in the flow of your urine, frequent or urgent need to urinate, especially at night, blood in your urine, or trouble having an erection.

Screening exams for prostate cancer may include the PSA (prostate specific antigen) test along with a rectal exam. Prostate cancer is a very slow growing cancer and finding prostate cancer with a screening test may not help you live longer. If you are age 40 or older, ask your healthcare provider about your risks for prostate cancer and if you should have the PSA test.

Colon or rectum cancer

Colon or rectum cancer is the third most common cancer in men in the US. Colon or rectum cancer is usually diagnosed after age 50. It is the third leading cause of death from cancer for men. Colon or rectum cancer is a treatable and curable disease if it is found early.

If you have a family history of this cancer or if you have had ulcerative colitis or other intestinal disease, you are at greater risk of getting colon or rectum cancer. You are also at greater risk for getting colon or rectum cancer if you:

- Eat a lot of red meat or processed meat, like hot dogs or luncheon meat
- Are overweight
- Are not physically active
- Have smoked for a long time
- Often drink a lot of alcohol

To help protect yourself:

- Eat a diet that is high in fiber, high in vegetables, fruits, and whole grains, and low in red meat.
- Stay fit with the right kind of exercise for you. A healthy goal for most adults is to exercise for 2 hours and 30 minutes or more each week.
- If you smoke, try to quit. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit smoking.
- If you want to drink alcohol, ask your healthcare provider how much is safe for you to drink.
- Studies have not shown that dietary supplements or aspirin help protect against colon cancer.

Tell your healthcare provider if you have rectal bleeding or a change in your bowel movements, such as diarrhea, constipation, or bowel movements that are narrower than usual.

Most colon or rectum cancers start from a growth of extra tissue, called a polyp, on the inside wall of the bowel. Colon or rectum cancer grows very slowly, over 10 to 15 years. Screening exams for colon or rectum cancer include checking your bowel movements for blood or a colonoscopy. A colonoscopy is a test in which a thin, flexible tube and tiny camera is put into your rectum and up into your colon to look for polyps. A similar test called a sigmoidoscopy looks at just the lower one-third of your colon. Polyps can be removed before they turn into cancer. If you are 50 to 75 years old and have an average risk of colon cancer, you should be screened with 1 of these 3 methods:

- Have your bowel movements checked for blood once a year.

- Have a sigmoidoscopy exam every 5 years and have your bowel movements checked for blood at least every 3 years between the 5-year exams.
- Have a colonoscopy every 10 years.

If you have a parent, brother, or sister who has had polyps or cancer in the colon, especially before they were 50 years old, you may have a higher risk for polyps or cancer. In this case, your healthcare provider may want to start screening you before you are 50. You may also need to be checked more often than the regular screening guidelines recommend.

Ask your provider when and how often you should be tested for colorectal cancer.

Laryngeal cancer (voice box cancer)

Laryngeal cancer is not common. It occurs mainly in men in their 50s and 60s. Laryngeal cancer can be life threatening. Heavy smokers and heavy drinkers are at greater risk of getting laryngeal cancer.

To help protect yourself:

- If you smoke, try to quit. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to quit smoking.
- If you want to drink alcohol, ask your healthcare provider how much is safe for you to drink.

There are no routine screening exams for laryngeal cancer. It may be found early by having regular dental exams to check your gums, mouth, tongue, and the upper part of your throat. Tell your healthcare provider if you have sudden hoarseness or other voice changes.

Skin cancer

Skin cancer is the most common type of all cancers. The 3 main types of skin cancer are:

- Basal cell cancer. Most skin cancers in the US are basal cell. It is slow growing and seldom spreads to other parts of the body.
- Squamous cell cancer. Squamous cell cancer also rarely spreads, but it is more likely to spread than basal cell cancer.
- Melanoma. Melanoma usually develops from a mole. It is also caused by too much sun. Melanoma is not as common, but it is more serious and more likely to spread to other parts of the body.

Most basal and squamous cell skin cancers appear after age 50, but the sun's damaging effects start at an early age. Melanoma may appear at any time after puberty. Skin cancer is a treatable and curable disease. Early detection is very important.

Exposure to UV rays from sunlight or tanning beds is the most common cause of skin cancer. You may be at higher risk if:

- You have fair skin that freckles easily.
- You spend a lot of time outside.

- You live where there is more UV radiation from the sun, like at a high altitude.

To help protect yourself:

- Cover up or apply sunscreen when you are out in the sun. Try to avoid sunburns.
- Check your skin regularly and tell your healthcare provider if you have a lump or mole that changes in size, shape, or color.
- Ask your healthcare provider to check areas of skin that are hard for you to see.

For more information, contact:

- American Cancer Society, Inc.
800-227-2345
<http://www.cancer.org>
- National Cancer Institute
800-422-6237 (TTY: 800-332-8615)
<http://www.cancer.gov>

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