

What Is Cancer?

Cancer refers to the development of abnormal cells that divide uncontrollably and have the ability to infiltrate and destroy normal body tissue. Cancer also has the ability to spread throughout the body.

Risk Factors

Your age

Cancer can take decades to develop. That's why most people who are diagnosed with cancer are 55 or older. While it's more common in adults, cancer is not an adult disease – cancer can be diagnosed at any age.

Your habits

Certain lifestyle choices are known to increase your risk of cancer. Smoking, drinking more than one drink a day (for women) or two drinks a day (for men), excessive exposure to the sun or frequent blistering sunburns, and having unsafe sex can contribute to cancer.

Your family history

Only about 10% of cancers are due to an inherited condition. If cancer is common in your family, it's possible that mutations are being passed from one generation to the next. Keep in mind that having an inherited genetic mutation doesn't necessarily mean you'll get cancer.

Take Care Of Your Body After Treatment

Exercise

Cancer patients who exercise often experience:

- Increased strength and endurance
- Stronger immune systems
- Fewer signs and symptoms of depression
- Reduced fatigue
- Higher self-esteem

Eat a balanced diet

Society recommends that cancer survivors:

- Eat five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day
- Choose healthy fats rather than saturated fats
- Select protein that is low in saturated fats

Maintain a healthy weight

Stop using tobacco

Drink alcohol in moderation, if at all



Diagnosed with Cancer



Box 403, 203 Patricia St.
Hudson Bay, SK S0E 0Y0
Phone~ (306) 865-3064
Fax~ (306) 865-3391

hbfamilyandsupport@sasktel.net
www.hbfamilyandsupport.ca

24 Hour Crisis Line
(North East Region)
1-800-611-6349

Nine Tips For Coping

If you've been diagnosed with cancer, knowing what to expect and making plans for how to proceed can help make this stressful time easier. Here are ten suggestions for coping with a cancer diagnosis.

Get facts about your cancer diagnosis

Try to obtain as much basic, useful information as possible about your cancer diagnosis.

Consider bringing a friend or family member with you to your first few doctor appointments. Write down your questions and concerns before hand and bring them with you. Consider asking: What kind of cancer do I have? Where is the cancer? Has it spread? Can my cancer be treated? What are my treatment options?

Keep the lines of communication open

Maintain honest, two-way communication with your loved ones, doctors and others after your cancer diagnosis. You may feel particularly isolated if people try to protect you from bad news or if you try to put up a strong front. If you and others feel free to express your emotions honestly, you can all gain strength from each other.

Anticipate possible physical changes

Plan ahead. Your doctor can tell you what changes you should anticipate. Members of cancer support groups can be particularly helpful in this area and can provide tips that have helped them and others. Prepare yourself now so you'll be able to cope better later.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle

This can improve your energy level. Eating a healthy diet consisting of a variety of foods and getting adequate rest can combat the stress and fatigue of the cancer and its treatment. Exercise and participating in enjoyable activities also may help. Recent data suggest that people who maintain some physical exercise during treatment not only respond better, but may also live longer.

Let friends and family help you

Often friends and family can run errands, drive the car pool, prepare meals and help you with household chores. Learn to accept their help. Accepting help gives those who care about you a sense of making a contribution at a difficult time. Also encourage your family to accept help if it's needed. A cancer diagnosis affects the entire family.

Review your goals and priorities

Determine what's really important in your life. Share your thoughts and feelings with your loved ones. Cancer affects all of your relationships. Communication can help reduce anxiety and fear that cancer can cause.



to modifying it if necessary. Take each day at a time. When the future is uncertain, organizing and planning may suddenly seem overwhelming.

Fight Stigmas

Some old stigmas associated with cancer still exist. Your friends may wonder if your cancer is contagious. Co-workers may doubt you're healthy enough to do your job and some may withdraw for fear of saying something wrong. Many people will have questions and concerns. Remind friends that even if cancer has been a frightening part of your life, it shouldn't make them afraid to be around you.

Develop your own coping strategy

Just as each person's cancer treatment is individualized, so is the coping strategy you use. Ideas to try:

- Practice relaxation techniques
- Share your feelings honestly with friends, family members or a counselor
- Keep a journal to help organize your thoughts
- When faced with a difficult decision, list the pros and cons for each choice
- Find a source of spiritual support
- Set aside time to be alone
- Remain involved with work and leisure activities as much as you can

What comforted you before you were diagnosed with cancer will likely still comfort you. Whether that's a close friend, religious leader or a favorite activity that recharges you. Turn to these comforts now, but also be open to trying new coping strategies.