



Cancer is a group of diseases in which body cells grow and divide in an uncontrollable way. These cells are malignant and can invade and spread to nearby tissues and other parts of the body.

Am I at risk of cancer?

More than one third of cancer deaths are related to behavioural and environmental risk factors which are modifiable or can be avoided, such as

- smoking
- alcohol consumption
- unhealthy diet, e.g. high intake of red meat and processed meat
- lack of physical activity
- overweight and obesity
- chronic infection by some viruses e.g. hepatitis B virus, hepatitis C virus, human papillomavirus (HPV), Epstein-Barr virus, etc.
- excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation from sunlight, sunlamps or other sources
- outdoor and indoor air pollution
- environmental or occupational exposure to cancer-causing substances

On the other hand, the risk of cancer increases with ageing. For some cancers, family history and genetic factors are associated with increased risk.

What can I do to reduce the chance of getting cancer?

According to WHO, between 30-50% of all cancer are preventable. Modifying or avoiding the modifiable risk factors can significantly reduce the chance of getting cancer and some examples are:

Avoid smoking and second hand smoke



Avoid alcohol consumption



Have a balanced diet



Be physically active

Maintain a healthy body weight and waist circumference



Get vaccinated against hepatitis B virus and HPV



Protect against excessive sunlight exposure

Minimise occupational exposure of carcinogenic substances by observing the occupational safety and health rules including the use of protective gear where appropriate

Practice safe sex



How can I detect cancer early?

Anyone with symptoms or body changes suspicious of having cancer should see a doctor for proper investigation and diagnosis.

Screening aims to detect early cancer or precancerous changes before they give rise to symptoms, so that early treatment can be offered. However, not all cancers have suitable screening test. All screening tests have limitations and are not 100% accurate. Persons considering screening should consult doctors for the potential benefits and risks of screening for an informed choice. Persons at increased risk of cancer should consult their doctors about their screening needs.

