



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.

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.

Some cancers may have applicable tests provided by medical professionals for cancer screening purpose. 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 seek advice from doctors for assessment of need and obtain full information on the potential benefits and harms of having the test before making an informed decision. Persons at increased risk of cancer should consult their doctors about their screening needs.

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

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

Avoid smoking and secondhand 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 adhering to occupational safety and health rules including the use of protective gear where appropriate

Practise safer sex

