



CANCER

This year, the estimated number of new cancer cases is close to a million and a half in the United States. Every three minutes a woman is diagnosed with breast cancer. More than 218,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer. Over 150,000 men and women will be diagnosed with colon and rectal cancer. More Americans die each year from lung cancer than from breast, prostate, and colorectal cancers combined.

Definition

Normally, cells grow, divide, and die. Sometimes, cells mutate and begin to grow and divide more quickly than normal cells. Rather than dying, these abnormal cells clump together to form tumors. If the tumors are cancerous (malignant), they can invade and kill the body's healthy tissues. From these tumors, cells can metastasize and form new tumors in other parts of the body.

* The list of common cancer types that are diagnosed with the greatest frequency in the United States include: Breast, Lung, Colorectal, Prostate, Skin (nonmelanoma), Bladder, Endometrial, Pancreatic, Kidney, Thyroid, Leukemia, Non-Hodgkin Lymphoma, and Melanoma.

Risks

Certain risk factors increase the chance that a person will develop cancer. The most common risk factors are: tobacco, sunlight, certain chemicals, family history, alcohol, some viruses and bacteria (HPV, Hepatitis B & C, Epstein-Barr virus, HIV), ionizing radiation, certain hormones, poor diet, lack of physical activity, and being overweight. Also, age is a common risk factor. Most cancers occur in people over the age of 65.

* A normal cell may become a cancer cell after a series of gene changes occur. Some gene changes that increase the risk of cancer are passed from parent to child.

* Ionizing radiation comes from rays that enter the Earth's atmosphere, radioactive fallout, radon gas, x-rays, and other sources.

* Painters, construction workers, and those in the chemical industry have an increased risk of cancer. Many studies have shown that exposure to asbestos, benzene, cadmium, nickel, benzidine, and vinyl chloride in the workplace can

cause cancer.

Prevention

In a recent survey conducted by the American Institute for Cancer Research, 36 percent of respondents said that cancer was their number one daily concern among a list of various diseases and physical conditions. One in four Americans thought that cancer is impossible to prevent.

* Scientist estimate that as many as 50 to 75 percent of cancer deaths in the U.S. are caused by human behaviors such as smoking, physical inactivity, and poor dietary choices. Tobacco use is the most preventable cause of death. Smoking causes about 30 percent of all U.S. deaths from cancer. Obesity and physical inactivity cause about 25 to 30 percent of several of the major cancers in the U.S.

* Eat a diet high in fiber, vitamins/minerals and low in fat. This includes whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Be active and maintain a healthy weight. Most experts agree that an adult needs to have moderate physical activity for at least 30 minutes on five or more days each week.

* Most Americans do not know when or how often to get cancer screening tests. Cancer screenings are recommended for all adults. Regular screenings can help detect cancer at its earliest and most treatable stage.

* Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer. Avoid excessive exposure to ultraviolet radiation found primarily in sunlight, sunlamps, and tanning booths. Apply a sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15 and wear protective clothing.

Sources: American Cancer Society, National Cancer Institute, U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, CDC, American Academy of Family Physicians, U.S. National Library of Medicine, American Institute for Cancer Research and Washington and Shady Grove Adventist Hospitals. This Health Bulletin is for educational purposes only. For additional information, consult your physician. Please feel free to copy and distribute this health resource.

If you or someone you love has questions about cancer, or cancer care, Washington Adventist Hospital has a Cancer Care Navigator. The Navigator is an advocate and a personal care coach, who can access the services and the information needed by anyone diagnosed with, or concerned about, cancer. To access the Cancer Care Navigator, call 301-891-5559.