

# CANCER AWARENESS

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# CANCER AWARENESS



**'Fig'ure out How to get figs into your diet .....p.4**

Cure on the horizon for prostate cancer?.....p.5  
 Melanoma the most serious form of skin cancers.....p.6  
 Origin of cancer not always known .....p.7  
 Signs and symptoms that might indicate cancer .....p.8

**SIMPLE WAYS to reduce cancer risk.....p.9**



Understanding cancer clusters .....p.10  
 Understanding vitamin D deficiency .....p.11  
 Skin cancer facts & figures .....p.12  
 The talents of therapy dogs .....p.13  
 Learn the different mouth sores .....p.14



**Wilms' tumor a lesser known foe to children .....p.16**

Cookies for cancer survivors .....p.18  
 Breast cancer affects men, too .....p.19



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# 'Fig'

Figs are rich in calcium, which promotes bone health that can help those at risk for osteoporosis reduce the likelihood of developing the condition.

## Figure Out How to Get Figs Into Your Diet

Figs are tasty fruits that boast many health benefits. They can be an important component of a balanced diet. Figs have been grown and enjoyed for centuries. Native to the Middle East, figs grow on a ficus tree and come in different varieties. The fruit ranges dramatically in color and subtly in texture depending on the variety enjoyed. Turkey, Greece and even California are the top fig producers in the world. It's possible to find figs from late summer through the autumn, depending on location. Fresh figs are very delicate and have a short shelf life. They can be kept in the refrigerator for about two days after being picked. Most people are familiar with the sweet dried figs that are available year-round.

One may not be aware of the health value of figs. First and foremost, figs are high in potassium, a mineral that helps control blood pressure. Individuals who have high blood pressure should consider figs as a natural alternative to medication or to use in conjunction with traditional therapies. According to medical research, low intake of potassium-rich foods, coupled with a high intake of sodium, can lead to hypertension.

Another benefit of figs is their high fiber content. Fiber-rich foods help promote a healthy digestive system, moving food through the bowels easily. Fiber helps satiate a hungry person

faster, meaning it's a tool that can be used for weight loss. Fiber may also help reduce the risk of certain cancers, like breast cancer.

Rich in calcium, figs can also promote bone health. Individuals at risk for osteoporosis can consider eating figs as part of a bone-strengthening regimen.

Information published in the Archives of Ophthalmology state that eating fruit every day can help lower age-related risk of macular degeneration, one of the primary causes of vision loss in the elderly.

Make figs a part of a healthy diet.

Here are some ways to enjoy this fruit.

- Eat fresh figs right off the tree. They're sweet and refreshing.
- To satisfy a sweet tooth, enjoy fig-stuffed cookies.
- Grind up dried figs with a little honey and use as a spread on toast or bagels.
- Stuff fresh, poached figs with nuts and enjoy.
- Add bits of dried figs to recipes that call for raisins, such as tarts or cookies.
- Put chopped fresh figs in rice, quinoa or couscous dishes.
- Fresh figs can be stuffed with goat cheese and topped with sliced almonds for a tasty appetizer at parties.

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# Cure on the horizon for prostate cancer?



**A human vaccine for prostate cancer has been successfully used in lab mice to cure the disease, prompting some to suggest a cure for men suffering from prostate cancer is on the horizon. A report published in the journal *Nature Medicine* states that researchers in the United Kingdom and those at the Mayo Clinic in the United States created a therapy that cured prostate cancer in mice with no apparent side effects. The treatment works in much the same way that other vaccinations work for various diseases.**

The researchers assembled DNA libraries that included healthy prostate DNA and put them in virus shells, the protective protein shells that surround many known viruses. These substances were then injected into the infected mice. The treatment tricks the immune system into producing antibodies specific to fight the particular cancer. The mice were cured.

This may shed promising light on not only prostate cancer treatment, but treatments for many different types of cancer. Using these vaccines may negate the reliance on radiation and chemotherapy to shrink tumors and instead look solely toward the body's own powerful immune system.

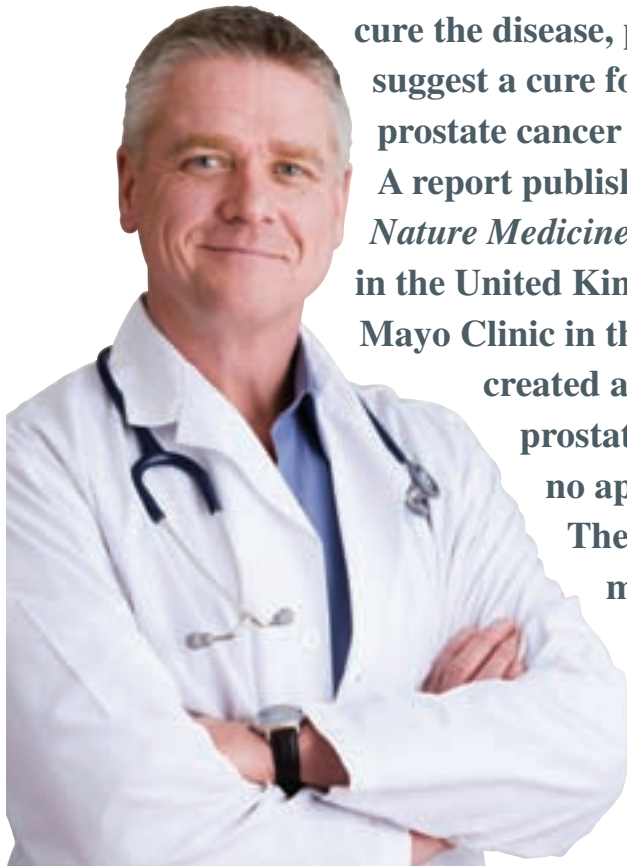
Although the mice were cured, human trials are still at least two years away, according to researchers. It is still unknown whether the treatment will be effective in humans, but many researchers remain optimistic.

**About Prostate Cancer**

Other than skin cancer, prostate cancer is the most common cancer among North American men. The American Cancer Society estimates that around 200,000 new cases of prostate cancer are diagnosed each year. In 2010, roughly 30,000 men died of prostate cancer in the U.S. Prostate cancer forms in a gland that only men have, which is located below the bladder and in front of the rectum. The role of the prostate is to first produce and then store a transparent liquid that is a vital component of seminal fluid or semen.

In healthy men, the prostate is the size of a walnut and can be felt during a routine examination. In many older men, the prostate enlarges due to inflammation, called prostatitis. If it enlarges too much it can restrict urine flow and cause reproductive problems.

Prostate cancer is routinely found in older men. Regular rectal examinations by a physician can help determine if prostate cancer may be present. A blood test called Prostate Specific Antigen (PSA) is also effective. PSA is low in normal prostates. Raised test results could be indicative of disease in the prostate. Although it can't definitively test for cancer, it can alert a doctor that there is a problem that requires further investigation.



# Melanoma

## the most serious form of skin cancers

**T**hough certainly not the most common form of skin cancer, melanoma is the most serious type of skin cancer. According to the American Melanoma Foundation, the incidence of melanoma has been steadily increasing for the last three decades.

The most common form of cancer for young adults 25 to 29 years old, melanoma can affect just the skin or spread to other parts of the body, including organs and bones. Because the incidence of melanoma is on the rise, it helps men and women, and even children and teens, to learn about melanoma in the hopes of preventing the onset of this potentially fatal form of skin cancer.

### What causes melanoma?

Normal skin cells become abnormal when people spend too much time in the sun. Once skin cells become abnormal, they can quickly grow out of control and attack the tissue around them. People who live in regions where sunlight is more intense, such as the southern United States, are more likely to develop melanoma than those who live in regions where sunlight is not as intense. In addition, parents should be especially mindful of their child's sun exposure. As the AMF notes, melanoma has been linked to excessive sun exposure in the first 10 to 18 years of life.

### Does melanoma run in families?

Melanoma does tend to run in families, and people with abnormal moles might have a family history of melanoma. While these atypical moles, which can be smooth or appear rough, don't cause cancer by themselves, having them could indicate a family history of melanoma. People with such moles should be especially protective of their skin when spending time in the sun.

### What are the symptoms of melanoma?

Melanoma often manifests itself in changes in a mole or other growth on the skin. When a mole changes in shape, size or color it could be a sign of melanoma. Typically, however, melanoma grows in unmarked skin and can be found anywhere on the body. Where melanoma forms often depends on gender. In men, melanoma is most likely to develop on the upper back. For women, melanomas often develop on the legs.

A flat, brown or black mole with uneven edges, melanoma usually has an irregular shape, with one half not matching the other. Melanomas can change color, ooze or bleed, become crusty, and appear lumpy or rounded.

### Is melanoma preventable?

Melanoma might not be entirely preventable, but men, women and children can take steps to reduce their risk significantly. Melanoma has been found on parts of the body that have never been exposed to the sun, but the best way to protect against melanoma is to be careful when out in the sun. Avoiding exposure to the sun's ultraviolet rays is the most effective preventive step, and people can do that in a number of ways.

- Stay out of the sun in peak UV hours. UV rays are at their strongest and most harmful between the hours of 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Stay out of the sun during these hours as much as possible.



- Avoid tanning salons. Researchers do feel there is a link between the growing popularity of tanning salons and the rise in melanoma cases. The AMF notes that the rate of melanoma incidence in young white women, who are among the most frequent tanning salon customers, is rising rapidly.
- Wear protective clothes when in the sun. Long-sleeved shirts, protective hats that shade the face and long pants are some of the clothing options that can reduce risk of melanoma.
- Wear sunscreen every day. Sunscreen should have a sun protection factor, or SPF, of at least 15. Apply sunscreen every day, and look for products that protect against both UVA and UVB rays.

### What if I am diagnosed with melanoma?

Melanoma diagnosis is not a death sentence. In fact, melanoma is staged on a scale of 1 to 4. A stage 1 melanoma is less severe, while a stage 4 indicates the cancer has spread to other parts of the body. According to the American Cancer Society, when melanoma is detected and treated before it spreads to the lymph nodes, the five-year survival rate is 99 percent. A person's chance of surviving a melanoma diagnosis greatly increases the earlier it is detected, so men and women who spend ample time in the sun should routinely inspect their skin for any abnormal moles. Parents, too, should make it a point to inspect their children's skin after exposure to the sun.

To learn more about melanoma, visit the American Melanoma Foundation at [www.melanomafoundation.org](http://www.melanomafoundation.org).

# Origin of cancer not always known

When diagnosed with cancer, patients are typically informed where the cancer is or, when the cancer is in an advanced stage, where it started. However, in some instances doctors struggle to determine the origin of a cancer in the body.

According to the Canadian Cancer Society, cancer of unknown primary, commonly referred to as CUP, means that the cancer has already metastasized at diagnosis and doctors do not know where it started. Upon further testing, the primary site for the cancer might be identified, but in many cases doctors never learn where the cancer began. In some instances, the primary cancer can be identified thanks to the cancer cells' appearance. The cancer cells usually look like the cells in the type of tissue in which they began. For instance, if breast cancer cells spread to the lungs, the cancer cells in the lung will look like breast cancer cells, giving doctors a good idea of where the cancer might have begun. But the primary cancer may not be found for a number of reasons, including:

- the primary cancer is very small and grows slowly,
- the primary cancer was actually killed by the body's immune system,
- the primary cancer was removed during surgery for a different condition and doctors never realized a cancer had formed.

A CUP diagnosis is not especially common, though the CCS estimates that roughly 2 to 5 percent of all new cases of cancer are CUP. The figures are similar in the United



Upon diagnosing a patient with CUP, doctors will study a host of factors to determine the best course of treatment.

States, where the American Cancer Society estimates that 2 percent of all cancers, or roughly 30,000 diagnoses, are CUP. Because they depend on where the cancer has spread in the body, CUP's signs and symptoms are different depending on each individual case. However, symptoms can include:

- a lump or thickening in any part of the body;
- persistent pain in one part of the body;
- change in bowel or bladder habits, including constipation, diarrhea or frequent urination;
- persistent fever for no known reason that does not go away;
- unusual bleeding or discharge;
- night sweats;
- persistent cough or hoarseness in the voice.

Despite unawareness as to its origins, CUP can be treated. In such cases, doctors will look at the cancer cells under a microscope, study lab results and then consider which organs the cancer has affected before determining a course of treatment. Determining the treatment strategy, however, is not easy, as doctors do not often find the origin of the cancer. In addition, CUP often involves fast-spreading cancers, most of which are already widespread upon diagnosis. The ACS reports that the average survival time is 9 to 12 months after the cancer is found.

More information on CUP is available at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) and [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca).

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## Signs and symptoms that might indicate cancer

Cancer is a disease so complex that even the most veteran of cancer researchers cannot fully explain the disease. Progress toward the diagnosis and treatment of cancer continues to be made, but there's still no telling if an individual will or won't get this potentially deadly disease.

One of the many things the medical community can say with certainty regarding cancer is that treatment is most effective when the cancer is found early. Melanoma skin cancer, for instance, can be easily removed if it's detected early and has not grown into the skin. In fact, the five-year survival rate, which indicates the percentage of people who live at least five years after diagnosis, for those whose melanoma skin cancer is detected early enough to remove the melanoma is nearly 100 percent. However, if that melanoma has already spread to other parts of the body by the time it's detected, the five-year survival rate is below 20 percent.

While the disparity between survival rates is not as severe for all cancers as it is for melanoma skin cancers, early detection is still imperative when it comes to beating cancer. Part of the reason cancer is not always detected early is that it doesn't always make its presence felt until it has already reached an advanced stage.

Pancreatic cancer, for instance, does not usually cause any noticeable symptoms in its early stages. Instead, the first noticeable signs of pancreatic cancer can be back or belly pain. At this point, the cells in the pancreas have grown and begun to

press on nearby nerves and organs. While these might be the first signs of pancreatic cancer, by this point the cancer is typically at an advanced stage.

Still, knowing the signs and symptoms of cancer is a great way for men and women to catch the disease early when it's most treatable. Though the following signs and symptoms are not always indicative of cancer, their presence should be enough for adults to consult their physicians.

**Fatigue:** Extreme tiredness that does not improve even with ample rest could be a sign that cancer is growing. In certain cancers, including leukemia, this happens in the early stages. In addition, some colon or stomach cancers cause blood loss, which can result in fatigue.

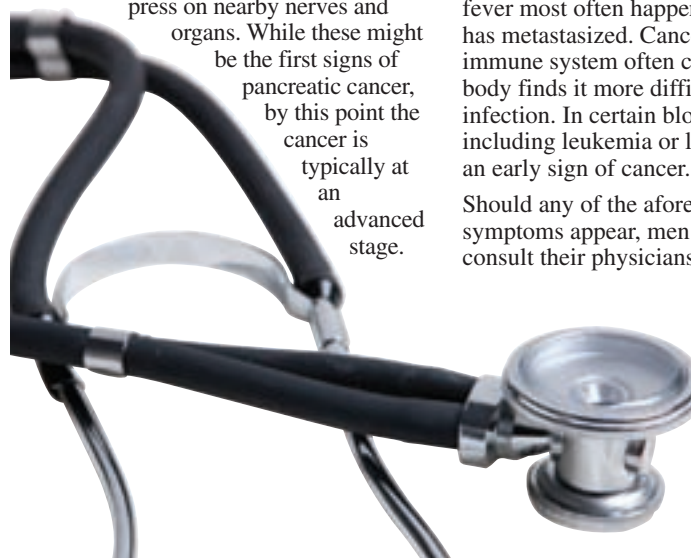
**Pain:** Early on, bone cancers or testicular cancer often manifest themselves through pain. Back pain can be a symptom of ovarian cancer or cancer of the colon or rectum. Unfortunately, when pain is a result of cancer, the cancer has already begun to metastasize.

**Unexplained weight loss:** One of the first signs of cancer might be the unexplained loss of 10 pounds or more. This is most common with cancers of the pancreas, stomach, esophagus, or lung.

**Skin changes:** Cancers of the skin and other cancers can cause certain changes in the skin. Jaundice, when the skin and eyes turn a yellowish color, is one such change. The skin can also redden, itch or darken, a condition known as hyperpigmentation. Excessive hair growth on the skin is another skin change that might indicate the presence of cancer.

**Fever:** A common side effect of cancer, fever most often happens after the cancer has metastasized. Cancers that effect the immune system often cause fever as the body finds it more difficult to fight infection. In certain blood cancers, including leukemia or lymphoma, fever is an early sign of cancer.

Should any of the aforementioned signs or symptoms appear, men and women should consult their physicians immediately.





# SIMPLE WAYS

## to reduce cancer risk



Reducing alcohol consumption is one way men and women can reduce their cancer risk.

**M**illions of people have had their lives touched by cancer. Whether dealing with their own diagnosis or that of a loved one, men and women often wonder what, if anything, they can do or could have done to prevent cancer from becoming a part of their lives. While cancer risk depends on a host of factors, some of which are beyond an individual's control, there are certain preventative measures men and women can take to reduce their risk of cancer.

**Stop smoking.** The Canadian Cancer Society estimates that smoking is responsible for 30 percent of all cancer deaths in Canada. In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention note that smoking causes 90 percent of lung cancer deaths in men and nearly 80 percent in women. However, within 10 years of quitting, an ex-smoker's risk of dying from lung cancer is cut in half while the risk for other cancers, including cancers of the mouth, throat, larynx, and cervix, decreases as well.

**Reduce alcohol consumption.** In a study examining the relationship between cancer and alcohol consumption, researchers working with the World Health Organization found that daily consumption of roughly 50g, or less than two fluid ounces, of alcohol doubles or triples the risk for mouth, voice box and throat cancers compared with the risk in nondrinkers. Additional studies have shown a link between alcohol consumption and cancers of the liver and colon. What's more, no fewer than 100

studies have found an increased risk of breast cancer with increasing alcohol intake. Men and women should consult their physicians about what constitutes a healthy consumption of alcohol.

**Be safe in the sun.** Though a deep tan might look good, individuals must emphasize protecting their skin from the sun. Skin cancer is the most common form of cancer in the U.S., and exposure to the sun's ultraviolet (UV) rays plays a significant role in the development of skin cancer. When going out in the sun, apply sunscreen with a minimum sun protection factor, or SPF, of 15; wear loose fitting clothing and a protective hat, as many skin cancers happen on the face and neck; and always wear sunglasses, preferably those that provide UVA and UVB protection.

**Maintain a healthy weight.** Being overweight or obese brings forth a host of potentially deadly side effects, not the least of which is increasing a person's risk for cancer. A report from the National Institutes of Health that examined being overweight and obesity in men and women found that carrying excessive weight substantially increases an adult's risk of getting breast, colorectal, endometrial (uterine), and prostate cancers. Healthy weight varies depending on the individual, so men and women concerned about their weight should consult a physician about the best ways to lose weight and maintain a healthy weight.

More information is available at [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca) or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

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# Understanding cancer clusters

Each year, more than 1,000 suspected cancer clusters are reported to state departments across the United States. Not exclusive to the U.S., cancer clusters can occur anywhere, and notable cancer clusters throughout history have included a scrotal cancer cluster among 18th century chimney sweeps in London, skin cancer clusters in farmers and a leukemia cluster in Massachusetts that inspired the book and film *A Civil Action*.

As notable as such cases have been, cancer clusters remain somewhat of a mystery to the general public. Scientists who study cancer clusters, which many define as a greater number of cancer cases than would be expected in a defined geographic area or group of people over a certain period of time, do so in an effort to identify areas of increased risk and in an attempt to determine what might be causing that increased risk. When newsworthy cancer clusters make headlines or even make it to Hollywood, some common questions typically arise.

## What makes a cancer cluster a cluster?

Cancer is a relatively broad term, referring to a group of more than 100 diseases, each with its own characteristics. In general, a cancer cluster involves one

rare type of cancer. However, a cancer cluster can also occur whenever there are larger than expected numbers of a more common type of cancer. In addition, a cancer cluster can also occur when a certain group of people gets a certain type of cancer that is not typical among their group, such as a group of children getting a cancer that's more common among adults.

These distinctions are important because cancer is so common. According to the American Cancer Society, nearly half of all men and slightly more than one-third of all women will develop cancer during their lifetimes. So it's entirely plausible that a number of people within a small geographic area will develop cancer at roughly the same time. However, unless cancer cluster characteristics are applicable, then these cases of cancer are likely not a cluster, but more likely a byproduct of cancer's prevalence.

## Where is exposure most common?

The ACS notes that most well-documented cancer clusters that are caused by a shared exposure are not found in the community where people live. Instead, these clusters are more often found in the workplace. That's because exposure to certain chemicals or other risk factors for cancer tend to be higher in the workplace

than at home or in a community. What's more, it's easier to trace the people being exposed in a workplace group than it is in an entire community.

## How often are suspected cancer clusters actually deemed clusters?

As mentioned earlier, the U.S. alone has more than 1,000 suspected clusters reported to its state departments every year. Once a suspected cluster is reported, an investigation will be conducted. In the U.S., as many as 80 percent of these investigations conclude that a suspected cluster is not actually a cancer cluster. During an investigation, a host of factors are considered, including the types of numbers of cancers involved, any suspected exposures that might cause cancer, and the area and time period in which the cases occurred. Specifics as to each person thought to be affected and about the cancers themselves also help investigators determine if a suspected cluster is actually a cluster. Each year, thousands of suspected cancer clusters are reported across the globe. Gaining a better understanding of cancer clusters can help calm any initial distress until enough research is conducted by the appropriate authorities to determine if a suspected cluster is actually a cluster.

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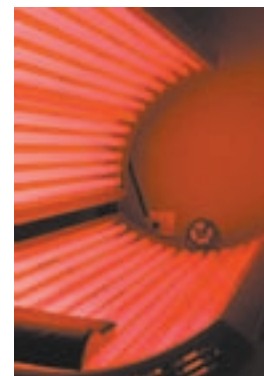
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# Understanding vitamin D deficiency

Spending significant time indoors could lead to a condition with some very negative side effects. Vitamin D has long been called the sunshine vitamin because it is largely produced in the body after absorption of the sun's rays. Without exposure to the sun, then it's very easy for a person to develop vitamin D deficiency, a condition affecting roughly 40 percent of the American public.

Many people understand vitamin D's role in promoting bone health, helping the body use the calcium consumed for strong bones. Vitamin D has often been linked to rickets, a condition in which bone tissue does not properly mineralize, resulting in weak, soft bones.

But the importance of vitamin D goes beyond bones. Low levels of vitamin D have been associated with various maladies, including cardiovascular disease, an inability to fight certain cancers, cognitive impairment, and increased risk of depression. Some research also indicates that vitamin D can help prevent or treat a number of conditions, including diabetes. Low levels of vitamin D may also attribute to schizophrenia and compound skin disorders like psoriasis.

Vitamin D is fat-soluble and is delivered to the body through fat cells. Individuals who are obese or have a high body fat index are more susceptible to vitamin D deficiency. Although vitamin D is essential, many people take it for granted. It is virtually

Sufficient, but safe, exposure to sunlight is one way to combat vitamin D deficiency.

impossible to get all of the needed vitamin D through diet alone. Sunlight is the single most effective way to receive the vitamin D the body requires. Furthermore, this way of receiving vitamin D is entirely free.

The trouble with sunlight exposure is that many people spend more time indoors than outside. Furthermore, when outdoors, many are heeding the warnings of dermatologists and other health experts and lathering on sunblock products. While they protect the skin from harmful UV rays, SPF creams and lotions also inhibit the body's ability to absorb vitamin D from the sun.

Diagnosing vitamin D deficiency isn't always easy. Many times doctors mistake it for fibromyalgia, simply because muscle aches, pains and weakness are symptoms of each condition. Doctors can determine vitamin D deficiency through routine blood tests.

Sensible exposure to sunlight, around 15 minutes a day, 2 to 3 times a week could be enough to restore proper vitamin D levels. Otherwise, supplementation is an easy way to also increase vitamin D, primarily for those who are concerned about UV rays.

Individuals who are undergoing a routine physical that includes bloodwork may want to ask their doctors to screen for vitamin D levels, as well as other essential vitamins. A doctor can determine whether a person is lacking in vitamin D and prescribe a regimen that may include dietary changes, supplementation, or increased exposure to sunlight.





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# Skin cancer facts & figures

According to the Skin Cancer Foundation, one in five Americans will develop skin cancer in the course of a lifetime. Despite that prevalence, skin cancer remains the proverbial elephant in the room, a disease men and women are certainly aware of, but many prefer not to think about. Thanks to a societal trend that associates a deep tan with beauty, many men and women prefer to avoid the subject of skin cancer. However, as the following facts and figures about skin cancer attest, skin cancer is a topic that cannot be ignored and one men, women and children alike need to learn about to better reduce their risk of experiencing this largely preventable disease.

- According to the American Cancer Society, men are more likely to develop non-melanoma and melanoma skin cancers than women. In fact, the National Cancer Institute notes the majority of people diagnosed with melanoma are white men over the age of 50.
- The rate of skin cancers increases with age. However, skin cancers, and especially melanomas, can be found in younger people.
- The five-year overall survival rate for melanoma, which represents the percentage of patients who live at least five years after diagnosis, is 91 percent. This includes patients who are disease-free, in remission or under treatment.
- The five year localized survival rate for melanoma is 98 percent. Localized cancer represents cancer that, at the time of diagnosis, has not spread to other parts of the body.
- The NCI's Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results program notes that nearly 800,000 Americans are living with a history of melanoma and 13 million are living with a history of nonmelanoma skin cancer.
- Basal cell carcinoma, a slow-growing and painless type of nonmelanoma skin cancer, is the most common form of cancer in the United States. Roughly 2.8 million cases of BCC are diagnosed annually in the U.S. Though rarely fatal, BCCs can be unsightly if the cancer is allowed to grow.

- According to the NCI, between 40 and 50 percent of Americans who live to age 65 will have melanoma or nonmelanoma skin cancer at least once.
- Roughly 90 percent of nonmelanoma skin cancers are associated with over exposure to ultraviolet, or UV, radiation from the sun.
- According to the National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, melanoma accounts for less than five percent of skin cancer cases, but it causes more than 75 percent of skin cancer deaths.
- The World Health Organization reports that 10 minutes in a tanning bed matches the cancer-causing effects of 10 minutes in the Mediterranean summer sun.

To learn more about skin cancer, visit the Skin Cancer Foundation at [www.skincancer.org](http://www.skincancer.org).

# The talents of therapy dogs

Many people think of therapy dogs as guide dogs leading the blind, or dogs sitting with seniors at an assisted living facility. While therapy dogs are responsible for these jobs, they do so much more — including acting as a trusted companion for someone diagnosed with cancer.

Although many therapy dogs are specially trained in their roles, just about any well-mannered dog can serve in a therapeutic capacity. People may be surprised at all the many assistance roles dogs can play.

**Help children read:** Dogs are not judgmental and offer no criticism, which makes them prime helpers for children who need help learning to read or who have stage fright. Children can read stories to dogs who listen quietly and build up their confidence levels. Some schools and libraries even institute programs where dogs are invited as the audience to student readers.

**Seizure alert:** Some dogs are trained to alert epileptics and those with seizure disorders to an upcoming episode, although this method of detection is not always foolproof. In general, seizure dogs provide companionship and security to a person during and after an episode.

**Cancer therapy:** Getting diagnosed with cancer can be a stressful event. Going



through chemotherapy and radiation can take its toll on the body. Cancer patients often need all of the love and affection they can get or sometimes just a quiet companion. In a program like Pets for Pals, therapy dogs sit with cancer patients, often sensing what ill people need. Dogs have the innate ability to love unconditionally. Having a dog around gives patients a different topic of conversation other than their health and treatment. Petting a dog has been known to lower blood pressure and reduce stress as well.

**Helping hands:** Individuals who are handicapped may rely on dogs to do tasks around the house, from turning on lights to grabbing remote controls. Some dogs help companions move around a space by offering stability and a handhold.

**Security:** Dogs have long been used as security guards. But even if a dog isn't a trained guard, he or she can alert if something is amiss in the house or if someone is at the door or outside of the home.

Individuals who live alone can benefit from the companionship and level of security that dogs provide.

Many therapy and service dogs start their lives as stray dogs or shelter dogs. Some training facilities actually seek out calm, well-mannered shelter dogs and give them a new lease on life as a person's helper or companion.



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# Learn the different mouth sores



Mouth sores can be painful, embarrassing and annoying. Not all mouth sores are the same, however. Learning about the causes can enable a person to find relief or prevent them in the first place.

There are a few main types of mouth sores, of which canker sores and fever sores may be the most familiar.

Mouth sores can be caused by irritation or viruses. It pays to know which is the case.

## Canker Sores

Canker sores are common mouth ulcers that manifest in a white or yellow sores inside of the mouth. They can form on the tongue, inside of the cheeks, the underside of lips, or on the soft palate of the mouth. Also known as aphthous ulcers, canker sores can form for a number of reasons. Stress or immune system response can bring them on. Irritation or mouth injury also can contribute to canker sores.

Canker sores are not caused by viruses or bacteria; therefore, they are not contagious. They are also

relatively harmless unless they become infected.

Because they are an open sore, they can be a gateway for germs to enter the body. If a canker sore has not healed in around 2 weeks, a doctor should be consulted. That's because the first sign of oral cancer is a mouth sore that does not heal. Therefore, a cancerous mouth sore may inadvertently be mistaken as a canker sore and overlooked.

Treatment for canker sores generally focuses on reducing pain. Topical analgesics may be used. For those who find braces or dental appliances cause canker sores, an oral wax to cover areas that rub the mouth or adjustments may be needed.

## Fever Sores

Fever sores, also known as fever blisters, are fluid-filled blisters that form on the lips, roof of the mouth and gums. They may last 7 to 10 days, at which point they may rupture and crust over.

Unlike canker sores, fever sores are caused by a virus that becomes active. They are the result of the herpes simplex virus, the same virus that is responsible for genital herpes, though the mouth sores are usually from HSV-1 and not HSV-2, the common cause for genital herpes. As many as 90 percent of American adults has been exposed to the HSV-1 virus, according to the



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University of Maryland Medical Center. The virus lies dormant but can be activated by conditions such as fever, trauma, hormonal changes, exposure to sunlight, and stress. Fever sores are contagious and can be acquired through sharing drinks straws or by kissing. They are often treated with an antiviral agent and a protective barrier ointment. Do not squeeze the blisters, and wash hands after touching a blister. The virus can be spread to the eyes or the genital area upon contact with these areas of the body.

**Leukoplakia**

Leukoplakia is a condition caused by excess cell growth in the mouth. It can form on the cheeks, gums or tongue. It is generally found in tobacco users or those with ill-fitting dentures that cause irritation. This condition can progress to cancer and should be monitored by a doctor or dentist.

**Oral Cancer**

Oral cancer can manifest itself in a number of ways, including sores that do not heal over time. It also may be identified by rough spots, crusts, bumps, lumps, swellings, or other unusual things on the lips, gums or inside the mouth. Unexplained bleeding of the mouth may also indicate oral cancer.

Because oral cancer may often be mistaken for trivial mouth issues, anything suspicious should be brought to the attention of a dentist or doctor. Individuals with a family history of cancer, those who smoke or use other tobacco products or consume alcohol excessively should be regularly screened for oral cancer.



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# Wilms' tumor

## a lesser known foe to children



The word “cancer” is used to refer to a group of more than 100 diseases. Because of that, it can be hard to keep track of all the different types of cancers, and some are inevitably bound to gain more attention or headlines than others.

One type of cancer that does not garner many headlines is Wilms' tumor, the most common form of kidney cancer in children. Roughly 500 new cases of Wilms' tumor are diagnosed in the U.S. each year, while the Canadian Cancer Society reports that, between 2003 and 2007, 220 new cases of Wilms' tumor were diagnosed in children and youth ages 0-19.

*(Editor's Note: Wilms' tumor is extremely rare in adults.)*

Despite its status as the most common form of kidney cancer in children, Wilms' tumor has no known cause. The CCS notes that 90 percent of Wilms' tumor cases develop sporadically and have no identifiable risk factors. While researchers have yet to link a specific cause to Wilms' tumor, they have extensively studied the formation of the kidneys in a baby and feel that, when something goes wrong during that formation, Wilms' tumor can result. An example of something going wrong during kidney formation is cells not maturing during the process. These cells instead stay like fetal cells, which can cluster and still be there after the baby is born. While these fetal cells often mature by the time a child becomes a toddler, sometimes they never mature and begin to grow out of control, resulting in a Wilms' tumor.

The symptoms of Wilms' tumor can mimic other conditions, meaning the presence of any of the following symptoms does not necessarily mean a child has kidney cancer. Instead, should any of these symptoms appear, parents should take their child to a physician immediately.

- painless lump in the abdomen
- fever
- blood in the urine
- diarrhea
- swelling of the abdomen
- pain in the abdomen
- high blood pressure
- changes to digestion, including loss of appetite, upset stomach, nausea and vomiting
- the appearance of large or distended veins across the abdomen





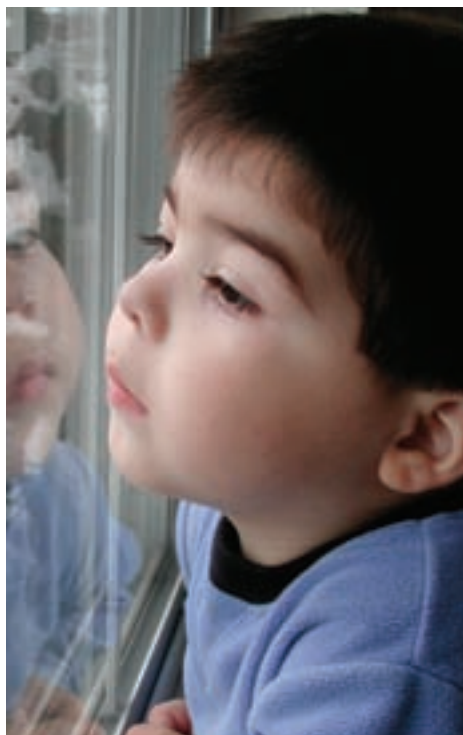
Because the cause of Wilms' tumor remains a mystery, the risk factors are difficult to pinpoint. But many of the known risk factors are hereditary. A child may inherit an abnormal gene from a parent, increasing the child's risk of Wilms' tumor, but not necessarily guaranteeing the tumor will develop. In fact, the American Cancer Society notes that only a small number of children with Wilms' tumor have a relative with the same cancer. The ACS also notes that Wilms' tumor is slightly more common among girls and African Americans, though the reasons for that are unknown.

Wilms' tumor has also been linked to children with certain birth defects. Roughly 10 percent of children with Wilms' tumor have a birth defect, most of which occur in syndromes, or groups of symptoms or problems that are commonly linked to certain changes in genes. In certain syndromes, part or even all of a gene might be missing, and these missing or abnormal genes can cause Wilms' tumor. Among the birth defects linked to Wilms' tumor are:

- **Aniridia:** This is a rare condition in which the iris of the eye, which gives the eye its color and controls the amount of light entering the eye, does not form completely.
- **Hemihypertrophy:** An overgrowth syndrome, hemihypertrophy occurs when one side of the body grows larger than the other.
- **Hypospadias:** This occurs in males when the urinary opening is not at the tip of the penis but on the underside instead.
- **Undescended testicles:** A condition that occurs when one or both testicles do not descend into the scrotum.

Treatment is successful for many children with Wilms' tumor, but the survival rate, as is the case with all cancers, varies depending on the stage of the tumor.

Wilm's tumor gets its name from Dr. Max Wilms, who wrote one of the first medical articles on the disease. More information on Wilms' tumor is available at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) and [www.cancer.ca](http://www.cancer.ca).



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# Cookies for cancer survivors

For those who have survived cancer, finding foods they can eat and also enjoy might not be as easy as it once was. But thanks to Rebecca Katz, author and founder of Inner Cook, a culinary business focused on teaching individuals and communities how to make healthy connections with food, finding delicious foods cancer survivors can enjoy is now easier.

In her book, "One Bite at a Time" (Celestial Arts), Katz offers up a host of nourishing recipes for cancer survivors and their friends. Some, like the following recipe for "Legal Cookies," might even raise an eyebrow. Healthy and delicious, these cookies replace sugar with Grade B organic maple syrup and spices, making them ideal for cancer survivors who still love their snacks.

## Legal Cookies

*Makes 24 cookies*

- 1** cup organic raw almonds
- 1** cup rolled oats
- 1** cup organic, unbleached all-purpose or spelt flour
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon ground cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon grated fresh ginger, or
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon powdered ginger
- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon ground cardamom

- $\frac{1}{8}$  teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon sea salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup safflower oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cup Grade B organic maple syrup
- $\frac{1}{4}$  teaspoon vanilla extract
- Jam, for filling**

Preheat the oven to 350 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.

In a food processor fitted with a metal blade, grind the almonds into coarse flour, about 2 minutes. Add the oats, flour, cinnamon, ginger, cardamom, nutmeg, and salt and process for another minute. Add the oil, maple syrup and vanilla extract. Continue to process until well combined. The dough will quickly form into a ball. Wrap the dough in plastic wrap and let rest at room temperature for 15 minutes.

Form 1 tablespoon of dough into a ball, place on the prepared baking sheet and make a thumb imprint in the center of each cookie. Fill with your favorite organic jam. Place the cookies on a baking sheet about 1 inch apart. Bake for about 15 minutes; the cookies are done when the bottoms are browned.



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# Breast cancer affects men, too

**T**hough it most often occurs in women, breast cancer can affect men as well. According to the American Cancer Society, breast cancer is roughly 100 times less common among men than among women, but roughly 1,900 new cases of invasive breast cancer are diagnosed among men in the U.S. every year.

Though men are less likely to get breast cancer than other cancers, it still helps to understand certain aspects of the disease that can help lessen their risk and prepare them should they or a loved one be diagnosed.

## Risk Factors

When it comes to risk factors for breast cancer, men might have several risk factors but never develop the disease. Other men might have none of the risk factors but still develop breast cancer. Perhaps most puzzling, even if a man is diagnosed with breast cancer, doctors still can't be certain what exactly was the cause, even if the man has one or more of the risk factors

associated with the disease. Similar to female breast cancer, many of the risks associated with male breast cancer are related to hormone levels.

**Age:** A man's risk of breast cancer increases as he ages, and the ACS notes the average age of diagnosis is 68. Inherited gene mutations: A mutation in the BRCA2 gene accounts for roughly 10 percent of all breast cancers in men. While mutations in the BRCA1 gene can also cause breast cancer in men, the risk factor is far less. In addition, mutations in the CHEK2 and PTEN genes can also increase a man's risk for breast cancer.

**Estrogen treatment:** Men with prostate cancer sometimes receive hormonal therapy that includes estrogen-related drugs. This can increase the risk of male breast cancer, but the ACS notes that risk is small compared to the benefits such treatments produce in slowing the growth of prostate cancer.

**Klinefelter syndrome:** Men with Klinefelter syndrome, a congenital condition affecting roughly 1 in 1,000

men, have lower levels of androgens, or male hormones, and higher levels of estrogens, or female hormones, than most men. Some studies have found that men with Klinefelter syndrome are more likely to get breast cancer than other men, though both conditions are so uncommon that more research is needed to determine a more concrete link between the two.

**Heavy alcohol consumption:** Heavy alcohol consumption increases a man's risk for breast cancer. That's likely because of alcohol's effect on the liver, which plays a role in sex hormone metabolism. Men who abuse alcohol are much more likely to develop cirrhosis, and men who have cirrhosis commonly have higher estrogen levels because the liver is less capable of controlling hormonal activity.


## Cause of Male Breast Cancer

The aforementioned risk factors can increase a man's risk of developing breast cancer. However, the cause of most breast cancers in men remains unknown.

## Male Breast Cancer Prevention

Preventing male breast cancer can be difficult because there is no known cause. However, men who maintain a healthy weight and a healthy lifestyle are less likely to develop the disease. Maintaining an ideal body and restricting alcohol consumption are two steps all men should take to prevent breast cancer and other diseases as well. Self-examination can also play a role in preventing male breast cancer. Men should never ignore a breast lump, as, similar to female breast cancer, male breast cancer can manifest itself in a lump on a man's breast. Men are often diagnosed with breast cancer much later than women, which could very well be because men are less likely to look for breast cancer than women. Should anything suspicious appear, men should report it to their physician immediately, as early detection improves the chances that male breast cancer can be treated successfully.

Men can find more information about male breast cancer at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).



## What is Locks of Love?

Locks of Love is a public non-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children in the United States and Canada under age 21 suffering from long-term medical hair loss from any diagnosis. We meet a unique need for children by using donated hair to create the highest quality hair prosthetics. Most of the children helped by Locks of Love have lost their hair due to a medical condition called alopecia areata, which has no known cause or cure. The prostheses we provide help to restore their self-esteem and their confidence, enabling them to face the world and their peers.

For more information, log on to [www.LocksofLove.org](http://www.LocksofLove.org)

### How to Donate

- 10 inches measured tip to tip is the minimum length needed for a hairpiece
  - Hair must be in a ponytail or braid before it is cut
  - Hair must be clean and completely dry before it is mailed in
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### Guidelines for Donating

- Hair that is colored or permed **IS** acceptable.
- Hair that has been bleached or highlighted is **NOT** usable.
- If shaving your head, first divide hair into multiple ponytails to cut off.
  - Layered hair **IS** acceptable if the longest layer is 10 inches.
  - Layered hair may be divided into multiple ponytails.
- Curly hair may be pulled straight to measure the minimum 10 inches.

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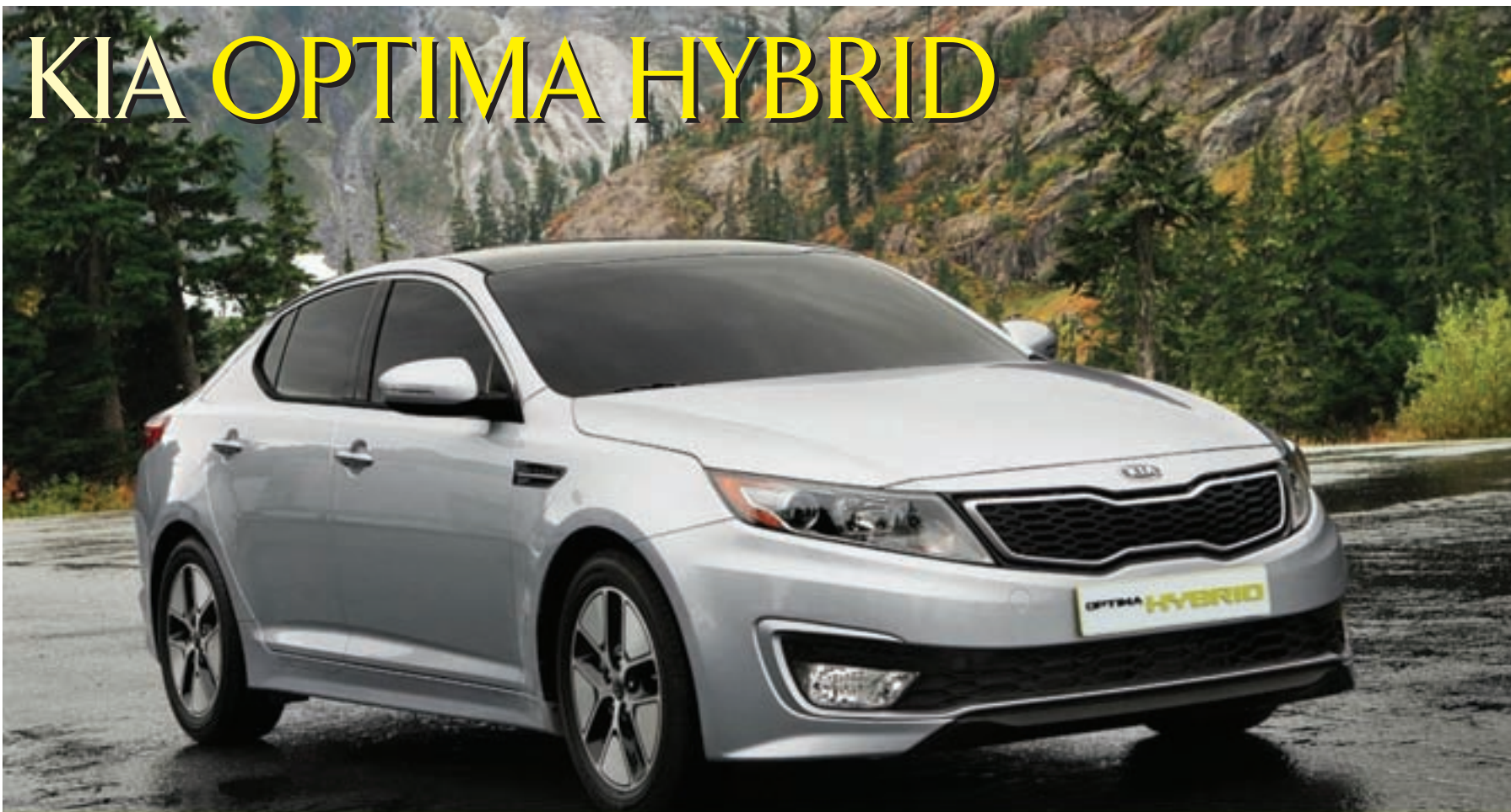
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