

Cancer Facts for Men

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India Cancer Initiative



The cancers that most frequently affect men in India are lung, oral, colon, and prostate cancer. Knowing about these cancers and how they can be prevented or found early can save your life.

Lung cancer

People who smoke are at the greatest risk of getting lung cancer and many other tobacco-related illnesses, such as heart disease, stroke, and emphysema.

Smoking is the cause for more than 80 percent of all lung cancers. Other risk factors include exposure to radon and asbestos, particularly for smokers.

What you can do

Lung cancer is one of the few cancers that can often be prevented, because it is usually caused by smoking. If you are a smoker, ask your doctor to help you quit. If you don't smoke, don't start. If your friends and loved ones are smokers, you can help them quit. Talk to your doctor about protection from exposure to harmful substances, such as asbestos, at work. It is very difficult to diagnose lung cancer in its early stages, so prevention is the best defence you have against lung cancer.

Oral cancer

People who use tobacco are at the greatest risk for oral cancer. All types of tobacco use increase your risk for oral cancer, including smoking beedi or

cigarettes, and chewing raw tobacco, gutkha, paan, and paan masala (with or without betal nut). Oral cancer is one of the most common cancers in India.

What you can do

Oral cancer can be found in the early stages with an oral exam by your doctor. Ask your doctor about how often you should have an oral exam. Quitting all types of tobacco use greatly reduces your risk for oral cancer. The best prevention is to avoid tobacco use altogether. For help quitting, visit the American Cancer Society Web site at www.cancer.org and talk to your doctor.

Colon cancer

Most colorectal cancers (cancers of the colon and rectum) are found in people over age 50. People with a personal or family history of the disease, or who have polyps in the colon or rectum or inflammatory bowel disease, are at greater risk than the general population. Eating a diet of mostly high-fat foods (like fried food or junk food), being overweight, smoking, heavy use of alcohol, and being inactive also increase a person's risk for this disease.

What you can do

Most colon cancers start with a polyp. Testing can save lives by finding polyps before they become cancerous. If precancerous polyps are removed, colon cancer can be prevented. Eating a low-fat diet rich in fruits and vegetables may also lower the risk of colon cancer. Talk to your doctor about getting tested for colon cancer. Also, tell your doctor if you have close relatives who have had colon cancer. You may need different tests begun at an earlier age.

Prostate cancer

The chance of getting prostate cancer goes up as a man gets older. About two out of every three prostate cancers are found in men over the age of 65. Having one or more close relatives with prostate cancer also increases a man's risk of developing this disease, as does eating a diet high in animal fat.

What you can do

Starting at age 50, talk to your doctor about the benefits, limitations, and harms of testing for prostate cancer so you can decide if getting tested is the right choice for you. If you decide to be tested, your doctor should offer you the prostate-specific

antigen (PSA) blood test and a digital rectal exam (DRE) yearly. If you have a father or brother who had prostate cancer at a young age, you should have this talk with your doctor starting at age 45.

Other cancers

Stomach cancer and cancer of the esophagus are also common in India. There are no recommended screening tests for finding these cancers early. Most are diagnosed by the presence of symptoms.

What you can do

Always be alert for any of the following symptoms, and if you do have a new symptom that does not go away, do not delay in talking with your doctor.

- Stomach cancer. The most common symptom is sudden weight loss without trying to lose weight and loss of appetite. You might also have indigestion, heartburn, nausea, or a vague discomfort in the stomach area.
- Cancer of the esophagus. The most common symptom is difficulty with swallowing that gets worse over time. Pain and weight loss can also occur.

The Best Defence against Cancer

Early detection – finding a cancer early before it has spread – gives you the best chance to do something about it. Knowing about these cancers and how they can be prevented or found early can save your life.

Take Control of Your Health and Reduce Your Cancer Risk

- Stay away from tobacco.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get moving with regular physical activity.
- Eat healthy with plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Avoid alcohol.
- Know yourself, your family history, and your risks.
- Have regular check-ups and cancer screening tests.

