

Signs and Symptoms of Cancer

At first, cancer, as a tiny mass of cells, causes no symptoms whatsoever. As a cancer grows, its physical presence can affect nearby tissues. Also, some cancers secrete certain substances or trigger immune reactions that cause symptoms in other parts of the body that are not near to the cancer (para-neoplastic syndromes).

Sometimes the initial indication is an abnormal result on a laboratory test done for another reason (for example anemia resulting from colon cancer found on a routine complete blood count).

Cancer affects nearby tissues by growing into or pushing on them, thus irritating or compressing them. Irritation typically causes pain. Compression may keep tissues from performing their normal functions. For example, a bladder cancer or a cancerous lymph node in the abdomen may compress the tube (ureter) connecting a kidney with the bladder, blocking the flow of urine. A lung cancer may block airflow through one segment of a lung, causing partial lung collapse and predisposing to infection.

When cancer grows in an area with a lot of space, such as in the wall of the large intestine or the lung cavity, it may not cause any symptoms until it becomes quite large. In contrast, a cancer growing in a more restricted space, such as on a vocal cord, may cause symptoms (such as hoarseness) when it is relatively small. If a cancer spreads (metastasizes) to other parts of the body, the same local effects of irritation and compression eventually occur, but in the new location, so the symptoms may be quite different.

Cancers that involve the membrane covering the lungs (pleura) or the bag like structure that surrounds the heart (pericardium) often ooze fluid, which collects around those organs. Large fluid collections can interfere with breathing or the pumping of the heart.

With so many different types of cancers, the symptoms are varied and depend on where the disease is located. However, there are some key signs and symptoms to look out for, self-analysis:



Unusual lumps or swelling – cancerous lumps are often painless and may increase in size as the cancer progresses



Coughing, breathlessness or difficulty swallowing – be aware of persistent coughing episodes, breathlessness or difficulty swallowing.



Changes in bowel habit – such as constipation and diarrhoea and/or blood found in the stools



Unexpected bleeding – includes bleeding from the vagina, anal passage, or blood found in stools, in urine or when coughing



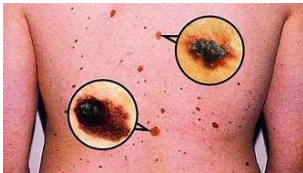
Unexplained weight loss – a large amount of unexplained and unintentional weight loss over a short period of time (a couple of months)



Fatigue – which shows itself as extreme tiredness and a severe lack of energy. If fatigue is due to cancer, individuals normally also have other symptoms



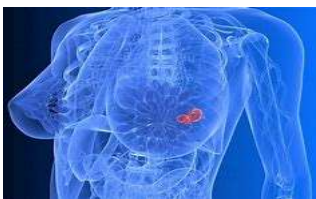
Pain or ache – includes unexplained or ongoing pain, or pain that comes and goes



New mole or changes to a mole – look for changes in size, shape, or colour and if it becomes crusty or bleeds or oozes



Complications with urinating – includes needing to urinate urgently, more frequently, or being unable to go when you need to or experiencing pain while urinating



Unusual breast changes – look for changes in size, shape or feel, skin changes and pain



Appetite loss – feeling less hungry than usual for a prolonged period of time



A sore or ulcer that won't heal – including a spot, sore wound or mouth ulcer



Heartburn or indigestion – persistent or painful heartburn or indigestion



Heavy night sweats – be aware of very heavy, drenching night sweats

THE MENTIONED SIGNS & SYMPTOMS OF CANCER ARE DEFINED AS A HEALTH AWARENESS

This information is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your Physician or other qualified health professionals regarding any medical condition.