

Why cancer screening is important

Cancer causes more deaths in South Africa than HIV/Aids, tuberculosis and malaria combined. According to the Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), 115 000 South Africans are diagnosed with cancer each year with one in six successfully treated. If you are aware of the risk factors, heed early warning signs and make use of the cancer screening and treatment benefits you enjoy as a Medihelp member, you can increase your chances of successful treatment.

Risk factors you can control

Although risk factors for developing cancer such as age and family history are inevitable, you can effectively reduce your risk by making positive lifestyle choices (which seem self-evident but are not always so easy to implement!), through:

- Beating the smoking habit
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Following a healthy diet which includes a variety of fresh fruit and veggies
- Protecting your skin from the sun
- Staying physically active and exercising regularly
- Avoiding excessive alcohol intake
- Regularly checking your body for warning signs
- Making use of Medihelp's preventive care benefits and check-ups.

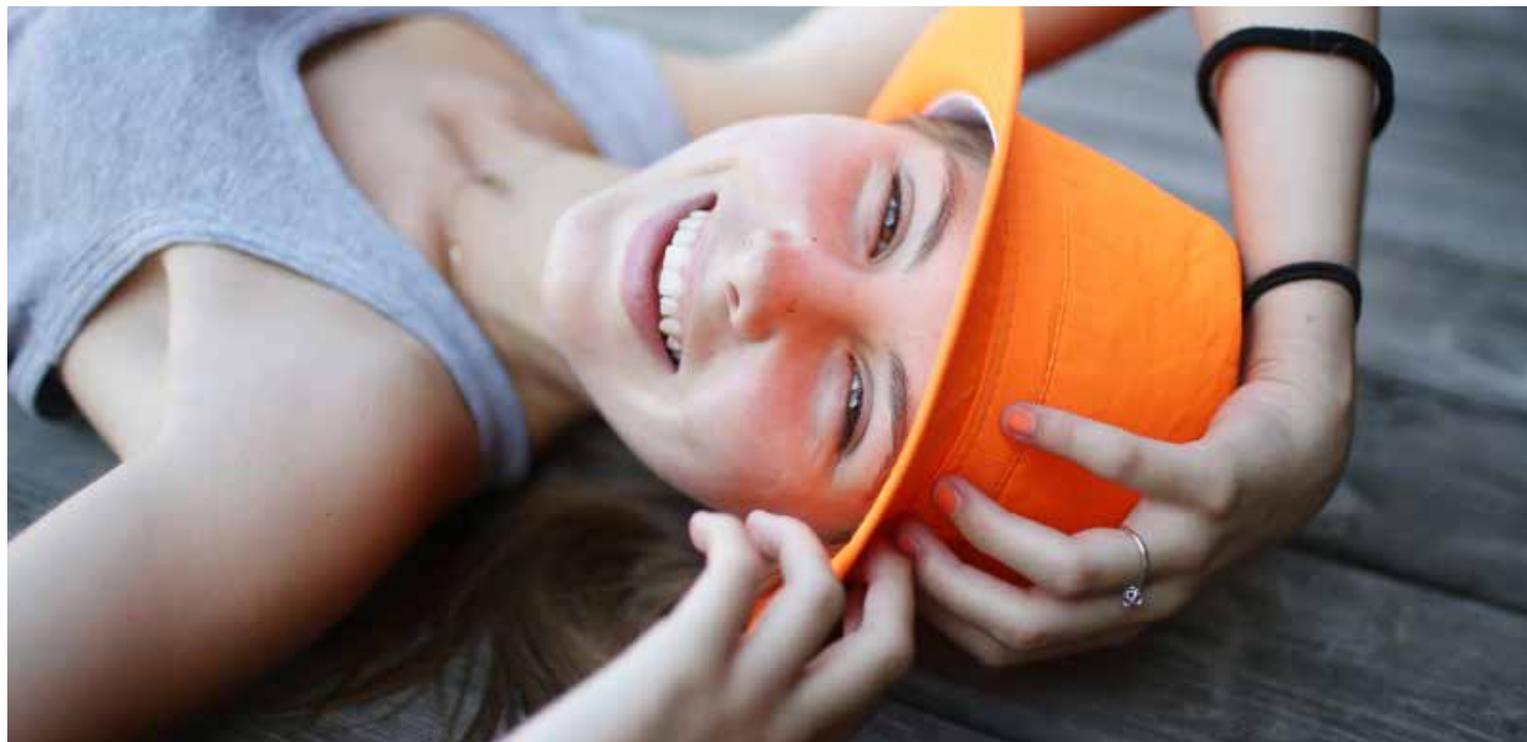
Early detection is key

The earlier cancer is detected, the greater the chance of successful treatment.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO),

early diagnosis is particularly relevant for cancers of the breast, cervix, mouth, larynx, colon, rectum and skin. Some early warning signs include:

- **Loss of appetite.** Cancer can change your metabolism. Stomach, pancreatic, colon and ovarian cancers can put



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pressure on your stomach, which makes you feel too full to eat and can lead to weight loss.

- **A lump in the neck or elsewhere.** Most cancers can be felt through the skin. These cancers occur mostly in the breast, testicle, lymph nodes (glands) and the soft tissues of the body. A lump or thickening may be an early or late sign of cancer and should be reported to a doctor, especially if you've just found it or notice it has grown in size.
- **Changes to your skin.** Skin cancers often start as changes to your skin, such as a growth that starts to look different, a mole that changes shape or colour or a sore that doesn't heal. They can be new growths or precancerous lesions – changes that are not cancer, but could become cancer over time.
- **Swelling in lymph nodes** that doesn't go away in a week or so - especially under the arms, which could be an indicator of breast cancer.

Help from Medihelp for early detection

Medihelp offers a range of screening tests requested by your doctor such as an annual pap smear for all ladies, while over 40s also qualify for an annual mammogram and men for an annual prostate test (PSA level). Keep in mind that these screens should be requested by a medical doctor.

Treatment

Medihelp provides support through the oncology programme offered in cooperation with the oncologists of the Independent Clinical Oncology Network (ICON) to give you the best possible care and treatment. More than 80% of South Africa's oncologists belong to this network, which provide the highest quality cancer care based on evidence-based protocols. ICON has a national footprint and uses a combination of treatments at their high-tech chemotherapy and radiotherapy facilities, as well as at private hospitals should surgery be required.

Upon diagnosis

Should you be diagnosed with cancer, contact Medihelp at 086 0100 678 and a consultant will assist you to register on the Medihelp Oncology Management Programme, as all oncology treatment requires pre-authorisation. Once registered on the programme, you will be referred to an ICON oncologist, who will provide you with the appropriate treatment plan.

Family history of cancer?

According to the **American Cancer Society**, about 5% to 10% of cancers are inherited. An interesting fact is that people from the same family sometimes develop the same kind of cancer because they share behaviour that increase their risk, like unhealthy eating habits. Be aware of your family's cancer history and have regular

check-ups for kinds of cancer that seem to run in your family. **é**

Sources: www.cansa.org.za; www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/diagnosing/causes-and-risk-factors/potential-causes-of-cancer/age-lifestyle-diet-reducing-risk.html; www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk; www.cansa.org.za/south-african-cancer-statistics/; www.webmd.com/cancer/cancer-early-warning-signs#3; www.cancercares.co.za/all-cancers/

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