

Giving Care

care and education
for cancer patients and those who love them



MAPLE TREE CANCER ALLIANCE

Cancer Basics

Cancer: A group of diseases involving abnormal cells that have the ability to spread to other parts of the body.

Not all tumors are cancerous!

- **Benign** tumors do not spread to other parts of the body.
- **Malignant** tumors are cancerous and can spread.
 - **Metastasis:** Cancer that has spread to another part of the body. Cancer can spread locally, through the lymphatic system, or through the blood.

Classifications: describes the type of tissue in which the cancer cells begin to develop.

- **Carcinoma:** Cancers that originate in the tissue that lines organs and tubes (breast, prostate, lung, pancreas, colon)
- **Lymphoma and leukemia:** originates in lymphatic tissue and blood, respectively
- **Myeloma:** originates in the bone marrow
- **Sarcoma:** originates in connective or supportive tissue (bone, cartilage, fat, nerve)

Staging: Classification of the extent of the disease. A numerical system is used to classify the extent of disease. The higher the number, the more serious the disease.

Stage 0	Cancer limited to surface cells
Stage I	Cancer limited to tissue of origin
Stage II	Limited local spread of cancerous cells
Stage III	Extensive local and regional spread
Stage IV	Distant metastasis

Approximately 1 in every 2 men and 2 in every 3 women will develop cancer in their lifetime.

Common Types of Treatment

- **Surgery:** Used to prevent, diagnose, stage, and treat cancer.
- **Biopsy:** Often done to help diagnose cancer. This involves removing a small piece of tissue and testing it.
- **Chemotherapy:** the use of medicines and/or drugs to treat cancer. Chemotherapy works throughout the whole body, and is used to kill cancer cells (adjuvant therapy), or shrink a tumor before surgery (neoadjuvant therapy). Chemotherapy is usually given at regular intervals, called cycles. Typically, a cycle may be a dose of drugs followed by several days without treatment, to give time for the cells to recover from drug side effects.
- **Radiation:** uses high-energy particles to destroy cancer cells.

Common Side Effects

- From surgery: pain, limited range of motion, fatigue, changes in body image
- From chemotherapy: fatigue, nausea, vomiting, pain, mouth sores, constipation, blood disorders, cardiovascular dysfunction, muscle weakness, neurological disorders
- From radiation: fatigue, loss of appetite, skin changes (red, swollen, blistered, sunburned, dry)

