

Cancer

What is it?

Cancer is a disease in which certain, abnormal cells begin to divide uncontrollably, invading nearby tissues and spreading to other parts of the body. There are more than 100 different types of cancers, ranging from those of the blood to those of the brain.

9 in 10 of all diagnosed cancer cases annually are expected to occur in Canadians aged 50 years and older



Early warning signs

- Significant, unexplained weight loss
- The onset of chronic fatigue
- Changes in the skin - can be jaundice (yellowing of eyes or fingertips), or changes in the appearances of moles (changes colour, is large or growing)
- Blood in the urine and or stool
- Enlarged and or swollen lymph nodes

Impact on quality of life

A cancer diagnosis is often life-changing - it has the power to affect both the emotional and mental well-being of affected individuals. Cancer can impede one's ability to completed daily tasks and often inhibits one from continuing to work. In terms of mental health, cancer can evoke feelings of distress, anxiety and depression.

Top caregiver do's

- Educate yourself - learn everything you can about the specific type of cancer affecting your loved one and how it manifests
- Try to approach all tasks with a positive attitude - it can help set a productive tone for the things you set out to do
- Encourage your loved ones to continue engaging in their passions and social activities that they enjoyed previously

Top caregiver don'ts

- Don't ignore your loved one's boundaries - although it is important to encourage leaving their comfort zones, recognize their limits and don't make them do anything they aren't comfortable with
- Don't forget to prioritize organization; cancer-care can become overwhelming very fast, try to keep an organization system in place for all important documents, forms, etc.