WHAT IS CANCER?

Cancer defines a group of more than 100 serious and potentially life threatening diseases caused by uncontrollable and abnormal cell growth.

NORMAL CELLS IN THE BODY

Normal cells grow, divide, and die off.

HOW CANCER STARTS

Cancer can form anywhere in the body and begins when cells grow out of control. More specifically, all cells have a DNA (deoxyribonucleic) makeup which prompts the cell to grow normally and corrects any mistakes along the way. Problems occur when the DNA fails to do its job causing a mutated/abnormal cell to develop.

DNA mutations can be inherited but most are caused by unhealthy behaviors or interactions such as prolonged sun exposure, tobacco use, or harmful chemicals in the environment.

In most cases, the cancer cells form a tumor. Some cancers, like leukemia, rarely form tumors. Instead, these cancer cells involve the blood and blood-forming organs and circulate through other tissues where they grow.

HOW CANCER SPREADS

Cancer cells often travel to other parts of the body where they begin to grow and form new tumors. This happens when the cancer cells get into the body’s bloodstream or lymph vessels. Over time, the tumors replace normal tissue. The process of cancer spreading is called metastasis.

HOW CANCERS DIFFER

All cancers are defined by the area where abnormal growth begins. Lung cancer and breast cancer are very different and need to be treated differently. Even if a lung cancer patient’s cancerous cells spread to the breast tissue, they must still be treated as a lung cancer patient.

TUMORS THAT ARE NOT CANCER

Not all tumors are cancer. Tumors that aren’t cancer are called benign. Benign tumors can cause problems – they can grow very large and press on healthy organs and tissues. But they cannot grow into (invade) other tissues. Because they can’t invade, they also can’t spread to other parts of the body (metastasize). These tumors are almost never life threatening.

For more information check out:
http://www.cancer.org/cancer/cancerbasics/what-is-cancer
NMSU Campus Health Center: Located on Breland Dr.
Open 7-30-4:30 Mon- Fri
Phone: 575-646-1512
1. ELIMINATE TOBACCO USE
Smoking damages nearly every organ in the human body. It is linked to at least 15 different cancers and accounts for some 30% of all cancer deaths, and 90% of all cases of lung cancer - the leading cause of cancer death in both men and women.

2. MAINTAIN A HEALTHY WEIGHT
In the United States, overweight and obesity contribute to 14% - 20% of all cancer deaths. Being overweight are clearly associated with increased of developing many cancers, including breast (in postmenopausal women), colon, endometrium, kidney, and esophagus, and it is suspected to raise risk of other types of cancer, as well.

3. ADOPT A PHYSICAL LIFESTYLE
Engage in at least 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity, above usual activities, on 5 or more days of the week; 45 to 60 minutes of intentional physical activity are preferable.

4. EAT HEALTHY
Eat more fruits, vegetables, and less red meat. Also avoid foods high in fat, sugar, or sodium.

5. LIMIT ALCOHOL INTAKE
Drink no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men. Alcohol consumption is an established cause of cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, liver, and breast. For each of these cancers, risk increases substantially with intake of more than 2 drinks per day.

6. AVOID SUN AND SUNLESS RAYS
Skin cancer is the most common of all cancers, and one of the most preventable. It accounts for nearly half of all cancers in the United States. Although repeated exposure to X-rays or contact with certain chemicals can play a role, sun exposure is by far the most common cause of skin cancer.

7. AVOID RISKY BEHAVIORS
Another effective cancer prevention tactic is to avoid risky behaviors that can lead to infections that, in turn, might increase the risk of cancer (for example, practice safe sex).

8. BE PROACTIVE AND SCREEN!
Take part in your yearly exams and assure that your physician is aware of your health status. Sexually active females should begin cervical screening and pap tests every two years.

For more information:
http://www.cancer.org/myacs/newengland/areahighlights/seven-steps-to-reduce-your-cancer-risk