

Does cancer have symptoms?



It's scary when something feels wrong in your body. While you shouldn't self-diagnose, you should talk to your doctor at the first sign or symptom of a problem. Treatment can be more effective when a medical condition, like cancer, is caught early.

Cancer doesn't always announce itself, but when it does appear, here are some symptoms worth getting checked out:

- **Change in bowel habits or bladder function:** See a doctor if you have prolonged constipation or diarrhea, or blood in your urine.
- **Fatigue:** It's normal to be tired when you're under a lot of stress or not getting enough sleep. But if your fatigue doesn't improve with rest, it can be a sign that something more significant is wrong.
- **Fever:** When your body is fighting infection, it's common to have a fever. In rare cases, it can also be an early sign of a blood cancer like leukemia or lymphoma.
- **Indigestion or trouble swallowing:** Persistent issues can be an indicator of esophageal, throat or stomach cancer.
- **Nagging cough or hoarseness:** Lung cancer can cause a persistent cough. Chronic hoarseness may point to larynx or thyroid cancer.

- **Pain:** Pain can be an early sign with some cancers (bone or testicular), and a later sign if the cancer has spread from its origin.
- **Skin changes:** Talk to your doctor if you have yellow-looking skin (jaundice), sores that don't heal or excessive hair growth. Some cancers, including those of the breast and testicle, can sometimes be felt through the skin. Discuss any abnormality with your doctor.
- **Unexplained weight loss:** Cancers of the pancreas, stomach, esophagus and lung can cause a weight loss of 10 pounds or more.
- **Unusual bleeding:** Coughing up blood can be a sign of lung cancer. In women, irregular vaginal bleeding can point to cervical cancer.
- **White patches inside the mouth or white spots on the tongue:** These spots may be leukoplakia, pre-cancerous areas that can be caused by smoking or tobacco use. Untreated leukoplakia can become oral cancer.

It's important to note that many, if not all, of these signs and symptoms can have other medical causes besides cancer. Seeing a doctor about your symptoms is key to maintaining good health, as is making sure you are up to date with cancer screenings. Horizon Blue Cross Blue Shield of New Jersey is here for you as your health needs change.