

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR HEALTH TOOLKIT

**CANCER DOESN'T WAIT.
NEITHER SHOULD YOU.**



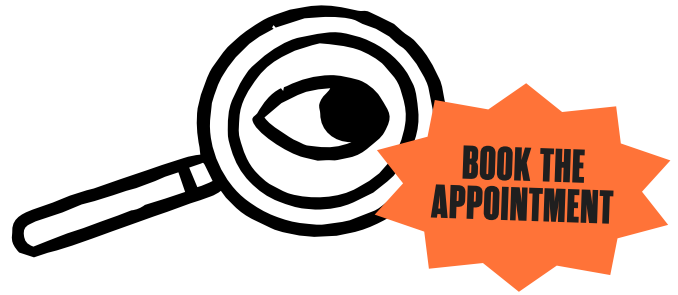
Whether you're scheduling a screening, paying attention to a new symptom, or simply trying to stay on top of your health, this toolkit is designed to help you prepare for appointments, ask better questions, and advocate for yourself with confidence.

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ALL ABOUT CANCER SCREENINGS



Cancer doesn't always come with a warning label. Cancer is often silent in the beginning, meaning you can feel completely healthy and still have something serious growing inside your body. That's why screenings like mammograms, colonoscopies, and Pap tests matter so much. They don't just detect cancer early — some screenings can actually prevent cancer altogether by finding precancerous cells that a doctor can remove before they turn into something bigger.

LOOKING FOR MORE REASONS TO GET SCREENED? FINDING CANCER EARLY MEANS...

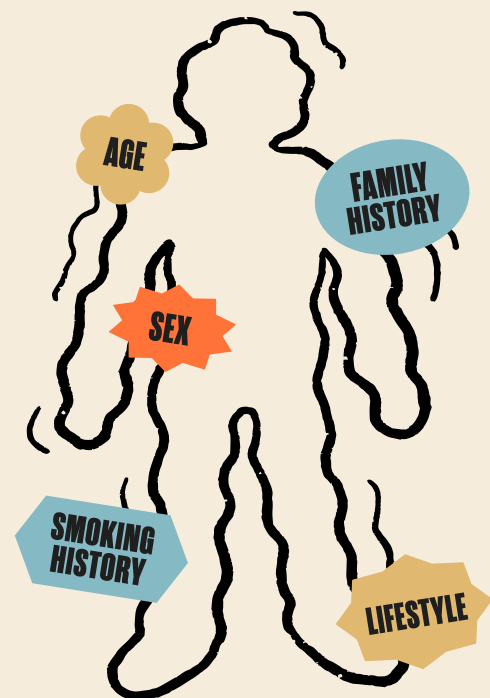
- Treatment is less aggressive with fewer side effects and quicker recovery.
- Surviving is more likely.
- The cost of treatment is 2-4x less expensive than if the cancer was found later.
- Quality of life is improved by preserving organ function and reducing the long-term toll on patients and caregivers.

WHAT CANCER SCREENINGS DO YOU NEED?

Cancer screening isn't one-size-fits-all. Your age, family history, lifestyle, sex assigned at birth, smoking history, and other risk factors can all affect when (or if) you should get screened. See next page for the general guidelines of staying on top of your screenings, but always talk to a doctor to confirm what's best for you and your body.

DID YOU KNOW?

Cancer screenings are covered by most insurance plans. If you are eligible for screening, private insurance plans and Medicare are required to cover screenings with no out-of-pocket costs (like copays or deductibles).



CANCER SCREENINGS BY AGE

Getting screened for cancer isn't about living in fear. It's about giving yourself the best possible shot if you do have cancer and peace of mind if you don't. A lot of cancers are highly treatable when caught early — but cancer doesn't care how busy you are, how healthy you feel, or how long you've been putting off that appointment.

DON'T WAIT, GET CHECKED.

AGES 18-29

Skin cancer screening is recommended every year for anyone 18+, particularly those at high risk of skin cancer.

AGES 30-39

Skin cancer screening is recommended every year.

Cervical cancer screening is recommended every 3-5 years for people with a cervix starting at age 30. Talk to a doctor sooner if you are at high risk of cervical cancer.

Prostate cancer screening could be recommended every 1-4 years starting at age 40 if you are at high risk of prostate cancer (including Black men).

AGES 40-49

Skin cancer screening is recommended every year.

Cervical cancer screening is recommended every 3-5 years for people with a cervix.

Breast cancer screening is recommended every 2 years starting at age 40. Talk to a doctor sooner if you are at high risk of breast cancer.

Colorectal cancer screening is recommended every 1-10 years starting at age 45. Talk to a doctor sooner if you are at high risk of colorectal cancer.

Prostate cancer screening could be recommended every 1-4 years starting at age 45. Talk to a doctor to see if screening is right for you.

AGES 50+

Skin cancer screening is recommended every year.

Cervical cancer screening is recommended every 3-5 years for people with a cervix until age 65.

Breast cancer screening is recommended every 2 years until age 74.

Colorectal cancer screening is recommended every 1-10 years until age 75.

Prostate cancer screening could be recommended every 1-4 years until age 75. Talk to a doctor to see if screening is right for you.

Lung cancer screening is recommended every year for anyone 50-80 years old with a 20+ pack-year smoking history.

YOU CAN PREVENT CANCER

Preventing cancer means reducing the chances that cancer develops in the first place. That can include lifestyle choices, vaccines, and screenings that catch problems early before they become something bigger.

Cancer prevention isn't about being perfect. It's about stacking the odds in your favor. Because while cancer can feel random and unfair — and sometimes it is — science is clear that there are real, everyday actions that can lower your risk. In fact, more than 40% of cancer diagnoses in the U.S. could be prevented by making changes to your behavior.

SMALL CHANGES = BIG IMPACT

You can lower your risk of cancer by making these 10 changes in your daily life.

At the end of the day, you don't have to become a kale-obsessed marathon runner to live a healthy life. But making small, consistent changes and always completing your cancer screenings will help you stack the cards in your favor.



Get an Anti-Cancer Vaccine

The Hepatitis B and HPV vaccines help protect you from viruses that can cause seven different types of cancers.



Get Routine Screenings

Screenings help find cancer and precancers, which can be removed before they develop into cancer. Screenings are available for breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, prostate, and skin cancer.



Don't Smoke

If you've never smoked, don't start. If you do, quit ASAP.



Avoid Carcinogens

Extended exposure to asbestos and carcinogens, such as arsenic, chromium, and nickel can increase your risk of cancer, specifically lung cancer.



Eat Well

Eating a balanced diet will help you stay healthy and prevent cancer.



Protect Your Skin

Skin cancer is the most common type of cancer. Sun safety and using the ABCDE's of moles to protect yourself is important.



Maintain a Healthy Weight

Excess body weight and weight gain as an adult can increase your risk for certain cancers such as breast, colorectal, endometrial, and kidney.



Get Active

Getting your blood pumping keeps you healthy both physically and mentally.



If You Drink, Limit Yourself

Everything in moderation. Alcohol creates an acidic environment in your body, which cancer thrives in. The more you drink, the higher your risk.



Practice Safe Sex

Using condoms helps protect you from contracting HIV, Hepatitis B, or HPV, all of which are linked to cancer.

WHAT ARE CANCER SIGNS & SYMPTOMS?

While every cancer is different, there are some warning signs you should know about. Having one of these symptoms does not automatically mean you have cancer, but if something feels off, sticks around, or keeps getting worse, it's worth talking to a doctor. You know your body better than anyone – don't ignore it.



Fatigue

Feeling extremely tired, and it doesn't go away with rest



Weight Change

Losing or gaining 10 pounds or more for no obvious reason



Eating Issues

Not feeling hungry, having indigestion or belly pain, having trouble swallowing, or experiencing nausea and vomiting



Swelling or Lumps

Finding swelling or lumps anywhere in your body, such as the breast



Skin Changes

Yellowing, darkening or redness, sores that won't heal, or changes to your moles



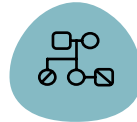
Trouble Breathing

Having trouble breathing, a cough, or hoarseness that doesn't go away



Bleeding or Bruising

Unexplained bleeding or bruising anywhere on the body



Family History

Your family's experience with cancer can impact your own cancer risk.



Night Sweats

Experiencing persistent, unexplained fever or night sweats



Headaches

Consistent and unexplained headaches



Vision / Hearing Problems

New or worsening vision or hearing issues



Mouth Changes

New or unexplained sores, bleeding, pain, or numbness



New Pain

New pain, or pain that exists without an obvious reason, that doesn't go away or gets worse over time, including muscle or joint pain

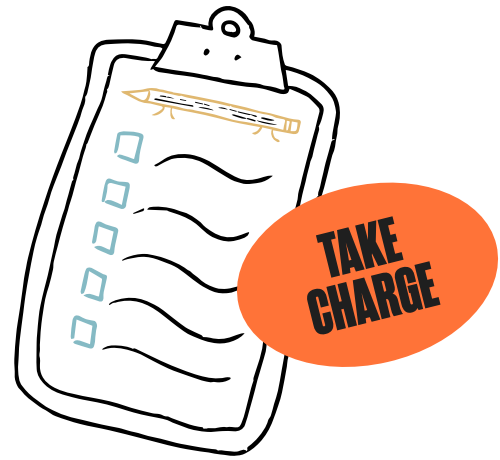


Bowel or Bladder Habits

Constipation or diarrhea that doesn't go away, a change in how your stool looks, pain when peeing, blood in your urine, or needing to pee more or less often than normal

HOW TO PREPARE FOR AN APPOINTMENT

Whether you want to talk to your doctor about a preventive vaccine, your next cancer screening, or a symptom you've noticed, it helps to come prepared. Here's what you can do before your next appointment.



COMPLETE THE FUCK CANCER SCREENING CALCULATOR

It can be hard to keep track of screenings – What do you need and when? What about self-exams? And how does your family history impact it? Knowing what cancer screenings to get and when to get them can make a world of life-saving difference for you and your loved ones. Take the Fuck Cancer Screening Calculator to get a personalized list.



**SCAN THE QR CODE TO TRY
THE SCREENING CALCULATOR
FOR YOURSELF!**

ASK ABOUT YOUR FAMILY HEALTH HISTORY

Your doctor will likely ask about your family health history of cancer (among other common diseases). Knowing what family member had what type of cancer, at what age, and if the cancer was successfully treated can be very helpful to understand your personal cancer risk. Remember – it's not gossiping, it's important health information.

PRINT AND FILL OUT OUR CANCER RISK ASSESSMENT FORM

Understanding your personal cancer risk is a critical step in finding cancer early when it is easier to treat. Sharing a record of your health, current and past illnesses among family members, and other important information with your doctor may show them a pattern of certain diseases to look out for. You can find the Cancer Risk Assessment form at letsfcancer.com/risk-assessment

WRITE DOWN ANY SYMPTOMS, QUESTIONS, OR CONCERNS

There's nothing worse than getting to a doctor's appointment and forgetting what you wanted to talk to them about. Bring a list of your concerns to your appointment, including when symptoms started, how often they happen, and what makes them worse. Take your time and make sure you discuss everything with your doctor.

MAKE A LIST OF MEDICATIONS AND SUPPLEMENTS

Similar to your family health history, your doctor will want to understand your personal health history. This includes any medications or supplements you're taking. Before your appointment, write down everything you're taking, including the amounts and frequency.

BRING A TRUSTED SUPPORT PERSON

You are always allowed to bring a trusted partner, friend, or family member to your appointment. They can take notes or ask questions that you may have forgotten or not even thought about. Having an extra set of eyes and ears can help you catch all the important information and make sure your health concerns are taken seriously.

PLAN TO TAKE NOTES DURING THE APPOINTMENT

Remembering all your health details is hard even when you're not worrying about cancer. Whether you go to the appointment alone or bring a support person, plan to take notes that you can refer back to in the future.

HOW TO ADVOCATE FOR YOUR HEALTH

Cancer doesn't always show up with flashing warning signs. Sometimes it's a weird symptom that won't go away. Sometimes it's a gut feeling that something is off even though a doctor is saying "you're probably fine." But at the end of the day, you know your body better than anyone else.

Advocating for yourself isn't being dramatic, difficult, or "too much." It's protecting your health — and potentially your life.

- If something feels wrong, **speak up early and clearly.**
- **Don't downplay what you're experiencing.** This isn't the time to be modest.
- If a doctor brushes you off, push back. Respectfully, but firmly.
- **Ask follow-up questions like:** "What else could this be?" or "What symptoms would justify further testing?"
- **Request documentation.** Simply asking, "Can you document in my chart that I requested screening or additional evaluation and it was declined?" can make all the difference in being taken seriously.
- If you feel dismissed, **get a second opinion.** Full stop.

If you're worried that your symptoms might be cancer, you don't have time to waste with a bad doctor or a bad experience. You are always allowed to:

- Ask questions until you understand what's going on with your health.
- Bring someone with you to appointments.
- Ask for copies of your scans, bloodwork, pathology reports, and medical records.

And you are absolutely allowed to find a new doctor if your concerns are repeatedly minimized.



TRUST YOURSELF

A lot of people hesitate to advocate for themselves because they don't want to seem rude, stupid, or anxious. But cancer patients and caregivers consistently say the same thing: they wish they had trusted themselves sooner.

Bottom line? You do not need permission to take your health seriously. If your body keeps waving a red flag, don't ignore it just because someone else did. Keep asking, keep pushing, and keep showing up for yourself. Because self-advocacy isn't overreacting — it's survival.

MOST CANCERS ARE CURABLE WHEN CAUGHT IN STAGE ONE.

**EARLY
DETECTION
SAVES LIVES**

START A CONVERSATION

Knowledge is power. Don't be afraid to ask all the questions, no matter how silly or repetitive they may seem. Understanding what's going on in your body will help you feel more in control of the situation. Jot your questions down as they occur to you and bring a list to your next appointment.

QUESTIONS ABOUT SCREENINGS

- "I want to be proactive about my health. What cancer screenings should I be getting right now? What about in the next few years?"
- "Can we go over my personal cancer risk factors together?"
- "What symptoms or changes should I watch for between screenings?"

IF CANCER RUNS IN YOUR FAMILY

- "Several people in my family have had cancer. How does that affect my risk?"
- "Would genetic counseling or genetic testing make sense for me?"
- "I understand general guidelines, but I'm concerned my family history puts me in a different category. What screenings should I be getting earlier or more often?"

IF LIFESTYLE FACTORS INCREASE YOUR RISK

- "I know my past smoking/vaping history may increase my cancer risk. Can we talk about screening options?"
- "I've had significant sun exposure/tanning bed use. Should I be getting regular skin cancer checks?"
- "I've been exposed to carcinogens and/or secondhand smoke. Does that change my screening needs?"

IF YOUR SYMPTOMS ARE BEING DISMISSED

- "I understand it may be nothing serious, but these symptoms are persistent and affecting my quality of life."
- "Can we talk about what additional testing or screening options are available?"
- "What else could be causing these symptoms if it's not cancer?"
- "At what point would you recommend imaging, labs, or specialist referrals?"
- "Can you document in my chart that I requested additional evaluation today?"

IF YOU WANT A SECOND OPINION

- "I'd feel more comfortable getting a second opinion before moving forward."
- "Can you recommend a specialist or cancer center for another evaluation?"
- "I want to make sure we're not missing anything. What are my options for additional review?"

Helpful Reminder – If even a tiny part of you wants a second opinion, you should get one! Most doctors expect them, good doctors welcome them. A second opinion can put your mind at ease and help you feel more in control of your diagnosis and treatment plan.

IF YOU'RE CONCERNED ABOUT INSURANCE COVERAGE

- "If insurance doesn't cover this screening for me, are there alternative programs or resources available?"
- "Are there lower-cost screening options, community programs, or financial assistance resources I should know about?"

At the end of the day, you know your body best. Keep these powerful statements in your back pocket for when you need them.

- "I'd rather check and be wrong than ignore something important."
- "I know my body and I want to keep investigating this."
- "I'm not trying to be difficult. I'm trying to be proactive."
- "Peace of mind matters, too."
- "Early detection saves lives. I want to give myself the best chance possible."



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LEARN MORE?**

TIPS, GUIDES, SUPPORT, AND MORE ARE AVAILABLE AT
[LETSFUCKCANCER.COM](https://letsfuckcancer.com)

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