



What factors increase your cancer risk?

Many risk factors—such as age, genetics, viruses, lifestyle choices, or chemical exposures—can add to your chance of developing cancer. **Cancer is usually not caused by only one risk factor but by several of them.** The more risk factors you have, the higher your risk of getting cancer. Knowing those risk factors, such as the ones shown below, can help you take steps to reduce your risk for cancer.



Age

Although people of all ages can get cancer, older people are at greater risk.



Genetics

Your family history may put you at risk for cancer.

- If you or someone in your family had a certain type of cancer, you may be more at risk for that type of cancer. Genetics play a large role for some cancers.



Behaviors

- Lifestyle choices that might affect your chances of getting cancer include lack of exercise, a poor diet, and heavy alcohol use.

- Tobacco use is a major risk factor for cancer.
- Exposure to the ultraviolet (UV) rays from sunlight, tanning beds, or other sources of UV radiation are risk factors for cancer.



Viruses or bacteria

Some cancers are caused by a virus or bacteria.

- The human papillomavirus (HPV) can cause several cancers such as cervical, throat, and anal cancers.
- Hepatitis B and C viruses can cause liver cancer.
- The Epstein-Barr virus may cause a type of lymphoma.
- *Helicobacter pylori* bacterium can cause gastric cancer.



Exposure to hazardous chemicals

Being exposed to chemicals may also be a risk factor. Substances known to cause cancer are called carcinogens.

- A few well-known carcinogens are asbestos, arsenic, radon, and trichloroethylene (TCE).
- A person's risk of developing cancer depends on how much, how long, how often, and when they are exposed to chemicals and if they have other risk factors.



Steps to reduce your risk of cancer

1

Increase healthy lifestyle choices

- Maintain a healthy body weight, stay active, and eat healthy foods, including fruit, vegetables, and whole grains.
- Don't use tobacco and avoid secondhand smoke from others.
- Protect yourself from UV rays from the sun by seeking shade, wearing sunscreen, and wearing clothing that keeps skin covered. Avoid use of tanning beds.
- Limit alcohol intake.

2

Get regular cancer screenings

- Talk to your health care provider about when you should receive screenings for cancers of the breast, lung, colon, and cervix.

3

Get vaccines that reduce cancer risk

- Males and females between the ages of 9–26 years should receive the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine to protect them against HPV-related cancers later in life. Those between the ages of 27–45 years should discuss whether to get the HPV vaccine with their doctor.
- Get vaccinated against hepatitis B virus to prevent liver cancer.

4

Reduce exposure to environmental carcinogens

- Test your home for radon. Learn more at Michigan.gov/Radon.
- Be aware of the chemicals in the products you buy for your home. Read product labels and follow the directions carefully.
- Wear a mask, gloves, or other protective clothing when using household chemicals to avoid exposure.
- Use chemicals in well-ventilated rooms or use them outside.
- Avoid disturbing asbestos-containing material during demolition projects, building, or home maintenance, repair, and remodeling.
- Be aware of chemicals you are exposed to on the job. Wear personal protective clothing and equipment if required or needed.
- If your home gets its water from a private residential well, be sure to conduct the recommended well water testing. Visit bit.ly/2lgrVvB for more information.
- Eat fish lower in chemicals by following the MDHHS Eat Safe Fish Guidelines at Michigan.gov/EatSafeFish.



For more information about your potential cancer risk, please talk with your health care provider. You may also visit Michigan.gov/Cancer.