

# What is Cancer ?

## Lesson 4

### LESSON

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#### Presentation of Objectives:

#### **Display and Review OHT: 1, Lesson 4 Objectives**

#### **Topic 1: What is cancer?**



*Read the following or you can also use Flipchart page 3, to describe the following:*

This topic will help us learn what cancer is and how cancer develops. Cancer is an illness that occurs when cells become abnormal and continue to divide and reproduce without control. If found early, most cancers can be treated. Sometimes describing cancer and how it develops can be confusing to others, especially when we are trying to describe it to a woman who has never heard the description. But we can make it easier to understand by providing examples. Can you think of other ways to explain cancer? In this next activity, we will look at a picture of cancer cells. Often, pictures help us better understand things that are difficult such as cancer.

#### **Ask the group to answer the following question:**

- ❖ What does the word cancer mean?



*Read the following:*

The human body is made up of tiny cells that can only be seen with a microscope. Usually cells grow and reproduce in a normal way. Cancer cells do not.

**Display and Review OHT: 2, Cells.** This graphic demonstrates the difference between a normal cell-without cancer, and an abnormal cell-with cancer. As you can see, the normal, non-cancerous cells have regular borders, while the abnormal cells, (cancerous) have irregular borders and reproduce rapidly within the body. Cancer cells grow without order and continue growing. They can form a tumor.

#### **Display and Review OHT: 3 Cancerous and Non-Cancerous Tumors**

- A tumor can be cancerous or non-cancerous.
- A cancerous tumor:
  - Is made up of cancer cells that grow rapidly.
  - The tumor can hurt tissues and organs.
  - Can spread to other parts of the body.
  - Can put your life in danger.

- A non-cancerous tumor (also known as benign):
  - May not be harmful to your body.
  - They can usually be removed.
  - Usually do not come back.
  - Do not spread to other parts of the body.
  - Normally does not put your life in danger.

### **Ask the following question:**

- ❖ How can we describe cancer in simple terms?

## **Topic 2: Risk factors and symptoms**



*Read the following:*

Now let's talk about the risk factors associated with cancer and the signs and symptoms that can indicate where cancer exists. There are three different types of risk factors.

### **Demonstrate and Review OHT: 4 Risk Factors**

#### **1. Environmental risk factors:**

Ultraviolet rays in sunlight can increase the risk for skin cancer. People who spend a lot of time in the sun are at risk for skin cancer. That is one reason why farmworkers need to wear protective clothing.

Exposure to substances that can produce cancer (carcinogens), such as asbestos, increases the risk for cancer. People who smoke and are also exposed to carcinogens are at even higher risk. Exposure to environmental smoke or second hand smoke increases a person's risk for cancers.

#### **2. Genetic/Family risk factors:**

The most significant risk factors of breast cancer are age, sex and personal history. Women with a family history of cancer of female reproductive organs such as, breast, ovary, uterus, or cervix, have a higher risk for developing cancer. For example, if you have a daughter, sister, or mother with breast cancer, then your chance of getting breast cancer is higher than a woman with no family history of breast cancer.

#### **3. Lifestyle risk factors:**

Smoking increases the risk for lung and many other cancers. Smokeless tobacco, like snuff or dip, and second-hand smoke also increases the risk.

People who are overweight and who eat foods high in fat and low in fiber may be at risk for many types of cancers.

People who drink alcohol heavily are at risk for cancer of the mouth, throat and liver. Those who drink and smoke have a higher risk.



*Read the following:*

A **sign** is something you **see** such as swelling or vomiting, or it can be something you **measure** like a blood pressure or temperature.

A **symptom** is something you **feel** such as dizziness, nausea or pain.

**Ask the following question:**

- ❖ What are some signs and symptoms of cancer?

**Demonstrate and Review OHT:5 Signs and Symptoms of Cancer**

There are seven warning signs and/or symptoms of cancer. They are:

1. Changes in bowel or bladder habits.
2. A sore that does not heal.
3. Unusual bleeding or discharge.
4. Thickening or lump in breast or elsewhere.
5. Indigestion or difficulty swallowing.
6. Obvious change in a mole.
7. Nagging cough or hoarseness.

**Topic 3: Myths and beliefs about cancer**



*Read the following:*

What are myths or beliefs about cancer? And how do you respond to them? Many women simply do not want to talk about cancer because of beliefs they may have. Some of these myths or beliefs about cancer come from things they have heard that have been made up, and others have some truth to them. One of the goals of this project is to encourage women to get screened. But, how can we do this if women do not want to talk about cancer because of their beliefs? Let's start thinking about these myths and what responses we can use to encourage women to talk about cancer if at first they are reluctant.

# ACTIVITY #1

## Myths and Beliefs about Cancer

This activity will provide the participants with an opportunity to talk about the myths or beliefs that may exist in the community about cancer, and the responses we can use to help women learn the truth.

1. Have the participants answer the following question:
  - ❖ **What are some myths or beliefs about cancer that you have, or that you have heard in your community?**
2. List the myths/beliefs on Chart paper/Newsprint paper.
3. Have the participants take turns responding to the myths/beliefs.
4. Take this time to correct any misinformation and encourage the participants to use these responses when they're out in the community.