

‘World Cancer Day’

4 February 2025



#WorldCancerDay

#UnitedbyUnique



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Dr Chrystal’s vision is to educate and motivate the individual and population towards better health outcomes.

Her mission is to help make sense of the rich Science articles that are important to health to the everyday person through her articles and to highlight the key health issues that affect you.

World Cancer Day is an international day observed every **4 February** to raise awareness about cancer, encourage its prevention, and mobilize action to address the global cancer epidemic.

The theme for World Cancer Day 2025 is "United by Unique." This theme emphasizes a **people-centered** approach to cancer care, placing individuals and their stories at the heart of the conversation.

CANCER IS ONE OF THE WORLD'S LEADING CAUSES OF DEATH. NEARLY EVERYONE KNOWS SOMEONE WHO WAS, IS, OR WILL BE DIRECTLY IMPACTED BY CANCER.

1 IN 5 PEOPLE WILL DEVELOP CANCER DURING THEIR LIVES

ABOUT 1 IN 9 MEN AND 1 IN 12 WOMEN DIE FROM THE CANCER

IN 2022, THERE WERE AROUND 20 MILLION NEW CANCER CASES

IN THAT SAME TIMEFRAME, CANCER CLAIMED 9.7 MILLION LIVES

THE COST OF CANCER CARE HAS AN ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OVER \$1 TRILLION

(from WHO.int)

Improved awareness, better prevention, and more effective treatment and care could all save lives.



worldcancerday.org

1. Improved awareness

What is cancer?

Cancer is a disease that occurs when changes in a group of normal cells within the body lead to uncontrolled, abnormal growth forming a lump called a tumour. If left untreated, tumours can grow and spread into the surrounding normal tissue or to other parts of the body via the bloodstream and lymphatic systems. This can affect the digestive, nervous, and circulatory systems or release hormones that may affect body function.

Types of tumours

Benign tumours: Non-cancerous and rarely life-threatening. They grow slowly and do not spread to other parts of the body.

Malignant tumours: Cancerous, grow faster than benign tumours, and can spread and destroy neighbouring tissues. They can metastasise, forming secondary tumours.

Precancerous conditions: Abnormal cells that may develop into cancer.

Types of cancer

Cancer can be classified based on the type of cell they start from. The five main types include:

Carcinoma: Arises from epithelial cells. Common types are breast, prostate, lung, and colon cancer.

Sarcoma: Affects bone or soft tissue. Common types are leiomyosarcoma, liposarcoma, and osteosarcoma.

Lymphoma and myeloma: Begins in immune system cells. Includes lymphatic system cancers and multiple myeloma.

Leukaemia: Affects white blood cells and bone marrow.

Brain and spinal cord cancers: Known as central nervous system cancers.

What causes cancer?

Cancer can be caused by a combination of factors. Some are modifiable, and reducing these risks can prevent over 40% of cancer cases.

Modifiable risk factors

- **Alcohol consumption:** Increases risk of cancers such as bowel, breast, mouth, throat, esophageal, liver, and stomach.
- **Being overweight or obese:** Linked to an increased risk of 12 types of cancer, including bowel and pancreatic cancers.
- **Diet and nutrition:** High intake of red meats, processed meats, and salted foods, and low intake of fruits and vegetables, impact cancer risks.
- **Physical activity:** Regular activity helps reduce cancer risks.
- **Tobacco use:** Contains carcinogenic agents responsible for 22% of cancer deaths.
- **Ionising radiation:** Includes radon, x-rays, gamma rays, and ultraviolet radiation.
- **Workplace hazards:** Exposure to substances like asbestos increases cancer risks.
- **Infection:** Viruses like HPV and Hepatitis B and C can cause cancer.

Non-modifiable risk factors

- **Age:** Cancer risk increases with age.
- **Carcinogens:** Substances that alter cell behaviour.
- **Genetics:** Inherited genetic predispositions increase cancer risk.
- **Immune system:** Weakened immune systems increase cancer risk.

What are some signs and symptoms of cancer?

- **Unusual lumps or swelling** – cancerous lumps are often painless and may increase in size as the cancer progresses
- **Coughing, breathlessness or difficulty swallowing** – be aware of persistent coughing episodes, breathlessness or difficulty swallowing
- **Changes in bowel habit** – such as constipation and diarrhea and/or blood found in the stools
- **Unexpected bleeding** – includes bleeding from the vagina, anal passage, or blood found in stools, in urine or when coughing

- **Unexplained weight loss** – a large amount of unexplained and unintentional weight loss over a short period of time (a couple of months)
- **Fatigue** – which shows itself as extreme tiredness and a severe lack of energy. If fatigue is due to cancer, individuals normally also have other symptoms
- **Pain or ache** – includes unexplained or ongoing pain, or pain that comes and goes
- **New mole or changes to a mole** – look for changes in size, shape, or colour and if it becomes crusty or bleeds or oozes
- **Complications with urinating** – includes needing to urinate urgently, more frequently, or being unable to go when you need to or experiencing pain while urinating
- **Unusual breast changes** – look for changes in size, shape or feel, skin changes and pain
- **Appetite loss** – feeling less hungry than usual for a prolonged period of time
- **A sore or ulcer that won't heal** – including a spot, sore wound or mouth ulcer
- **Heartburn or indigestion** – persistent or painful heartburn or indigestion
- **Heavy night sweats** – be aware of very heavy, drenching night sweats

Early detection and regular health screening is important for your health.

2. Prevention

Primary prevention: Reducing the exposure to risk factors

Nearly half of cancer deaths are preventable through modifiable risk factors, underscoring the need for governments to support individuals in making healthy lifestyle choices with effective regulation of tobacco, alcohol, and ultra-processed food and sugary beverages, reduce pollution, provide more green spaces and opportunities for physical activity.

Individuals can adopt healthy lifestyles, avoid tobacco and excessive alcohol, limit sun exposure, get vaccinated, and encourage others to do the same.

Employers can enforce policies to prevent exposure to carcinogens and promote healthy lifestyles.

Schools can educate about cancer risk factors and promote good nutrition and physical activity.

Communities can develop environments that support health and well-being.

Secondary prevention: Focuses on screening and early detection to catch cancer at its earliest and most treatable stages.

Screening tests such as mammograms for breast cancer, pap smears for cervical cancer, and colonoscopies for colorectal cancer.

Early detection significantly increases survival rates.

The 6 pillars of lifestyle medicine

1. WHOLE FOOD, PLANT-BASED NUTRITION

Choose whole grains and whole grain products over refined grains and other highly processed carbohydrates, skip the sugar drinks, choose healthy fats, limit red meat and avoid processed meat.

2. PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Be more physically active. Aim for a minimum of 150mins per week of moderate intensity exercise for a start.

3. STRESS MANAGEMENT

Learning healthy strategies to manage stress can lead to improved health and productivity.

4. AVOIDANCE OF RISKY SUBSTANCES

Don't smoke and don't drink alcohol.

5. RESTORATIVE SLEEP

Strive for 7 or more hours per night for optimal health

6. SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Positive social connections and relationships affect our physical, mental and emotional health. Leveraging the power of relationships and social networks can help reinforce healthy behaviours.

Key points

- Make healthy lifestyle choices.
- Engage with your doctor regularly for your health checks.

Health tips:

Surround yourself in a conducive healthy living environment.

Be mindful of the physical and digital environments you surround yourself in. Spend more time engaging with health seeking behaviour activities and communities to inspire and motivate your fitness journey.

Engage with your doctor and health professionals regularly.

Schedule regular health checks with your doctor, health coach and other health professionals.

Food for thought:

Be thankful for a day to make a difference to your health while you are healthy and safe.

Never take for granted your health when healthy.

Make improvements if you are not.

Develop a healthy relationship with exercise. It is the best thing you can do for yourself.

Do something today that your future self will thank you for.

The best day to start exercising is today.

Final Thoughts:

The next time you have your health screening done, spare a moment to reflect on your lifestyle habits and discuss with your doctor on ways to improve the above towards a better and healthier you and our planet.

'Towards better health outcomes'



Dr Chrystal Fong provides comprehensive health screening and GP services to suit your individual needs.

We hope to be of service in improving your health and well-being

Schedule an appointment with Dr Chrystal Fong:



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About the author:

Dr Chrystal Fong Chern Ying (MBBS Melbourne, FRACGP) is currently practicing as a family physician at Asia HealthPartners under the subsidiary of Singapore Institute of Advanced Medicine (SAM) Holdings, located at Lucky Plaza, Orchard, Singapore.

Dr Chrystal Fong is listed on the editors list of health screening providers on Health365, a healthcare, wellness and aesthetic medicine publishing agency in Asia.

She is featured in the Britishpedia's 6th edition of 'Successful People in Malaysia and Singapore'.

With her interest in lifestyle medicine, medical technology and longevity medicine (Certified), she also takes personal pride in living the lifestyle medicine pillars herself and advocating through her sports communities and social media platforms.

Her personal mantra being 'The world is changed by your example, not your opinion.'

She is a member of the Singapore College of Family Physicians, Singapore Medical Association, Singapore Society of Behavioural Health, Singaporean Society of Lifestyle Medicine, American College of Lifestyle Medicine, HIMSS (Healthcare Information and Management Systems Society).

Being certified in Wellness and Behaviour modification with International Sports Academy, her consultations incorporate health coaching methods. She is also certified in Exercise Prescription and is on the registry of 'Exercise is Medicine' Singapore.