

## Cancer

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States, after heart disease. Learning more about cancer and what you can do to prevent and detect it can help improve your long-term health and overall well-being.

### **What is cancer?**

Cancer is distinguished by abnormal cells growing and spreading uncontrollably in the body. These abnormal cells multiply and form tumors that may attack and destroy normal cells. Often, tumors spread from their primary site to a different part of the body, which is called metastasis.

### **What are risk factors?**

A risk factor is anything that increases someone's chance of developing a disease. However, just because someone displays risk factors for cancer does not necessarily mean that he or she will develop cancer. Risk factors vary between cancers, but may include:

- Smoking
- Heavy use of alcohol
- Family history
- High fat diet

### **How can I prevent cancer?**

Living a healthy lifestyle may help prevent many cancers. For example, smoking and heavy use of alcohol are two risk factors that, if eliminated, can help reduce the risk of lung, mouth, throat and other cancers. In addition, avoiding the sun's harmful rays can prevent skin cancer. Maintaining a healthy, well-balanced diet is also important.

### **What are the signs of cancer?**

Signs vary with each cancer type. Be aware of any unusual changes in your body. See your doctor if you discover anything that seems out of the ordinary.

### **How is cancer detected?**

Regular checkups are important. There are tests that can help detect cancer in its earliest stages—mammograms for breast cancer; fecal occult blood tests, sigmoidoscopies and colonoscopies for colorectal cancer; Pap tests for cervical cancer; and digital rectal exams for prostate cancer.

### **What are the treatment options?**

Cancer can be treated with chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapy, immunotherapy, surgery or a combination of any of these treatments. If you are diagnosed with cancer, talk with your doctor about the options that are right for your situation.

**If you would like to learn more about cancer or other health issues,  
call Optum® any time—24 hours every day.**

**NurseLine 1-800-475-7923**

TDD/TTY callers, please call the National Relay Center  
at 1-800-855-2880 and ask for 1-800-475-7923.