The Lighthouse Wellness Center – Peace, Love and Healthy Living Opportunities in the Heart of North Omaha

The dictionary defines the term “lighthouse” as “a tower with a light that gives warning of shallow waters and rocks to passing ships.” But a lighthouse is also a place of refuge and rescue for people lost at sea. The light gives them a direction to aim for when they have lost their way.

Once you have been inside The Lighthouse Wellness Center, 5404 Ames Avenue, you will know exactly why the founders, Haskell and Shirley Lee, chose this name their lifelong community health dream project.

“In 1999, our son Jeffrey was in a horrific automobile crash,” said Shirley Lee, 76. “Jeffrey was in a coma for two months, endured four more months in rehabilitation at Immanuel Health Center, then a long-term rehabilitation care facility for another six months. My son permanently lost the use of his legs and must use a wheel chair for the rest of his life.”

Shirley and Haskell learned the hard way that when people are involved in long-term rehabilitation, the extent of their care is dictated by the progress reports from rehabilitation therapists and the insurance company. The insurance company only pays for expensive rehabilitation as long as the patient is making measurable progress. When the reports indicate that the patient is no longer making measurable progress, the payments stop and the patient is on his own.

“We will always believe that if more extensive rehabilitation had been provided our son earlier and lasted longer, he may have been able to recover the use of his legs,” said Haskell Lee, 77. “He is our inspiration to create a wellness center for people in need of rehabilitation equipment and expertise, even if they no longer have insurance coverage or have been told they have made all the progress possible.”

Haskell and Shirley Lee have been married for more than 59 years. They met when they were 14 years old. Shirley graduated from Central and Haskell from Tech High School. In addition to Jeffrey, they have four other children, two of whom are physical and occupational therapists.

The Lees are Seventh Day Adventists and believe that medical science is only half of the equation to restored health and ability. They believe in the healing power of Jesus Christ and divine intervention in the healing process. They are not medical professionals. The Lighthouse is not a “health clinic.” It is a resource to be used by people who can be helped by the physical equipment and learning opportunities that are both mental and spiritual.
The Lees own the building that houses The Lighthouse. In a few months, the dentist who has been leasing the other half of the structure will relocate. The rest of the building will be converted for use by children with mental and physical disabilities.

The Lighthouse Wellness Center is in a section of Ames Avenue that has suffered multiple shootings and even a murder just across the street. To step off Ames Avenue into The Lighthouse is to truly witness a miracle.

The facility has two floors. It is immaculately clean and the décor in every room is fresh, beautiful, and decorated as if Shirley Haskell had a professional interior decorator do the whole place.

“Every piece of furniture and accessory in The Lighthouse has come from the Goodwill and Salvation Army recycling shops,” Shirley said. “My husband and I, with the help of the Lord’s volunteers, have gutted this building and remodeled it from top to bottom. We didn’t just want to provide fitness and rehabilitation equipment for the less fortunate to use. We want them to come in here and feel a sense of peace, and beauty and be reminded that they are God’s children. The Lord wants us well and filled with hope for a better future, physically, mentally and spiritually.”

The Lees have created what is possibly the biggest health care opportunity in North Omaha for poor folks ever done by people who are not health professionals themselves.

The Quadriciser machine, the only one of its kind in the state of Nebraska, is designed to exercise the legs and arms of someone who has lost function/muscle tone in both. It does it automatically, and for people who are bed-ridden or live their lives in wheel chairs, it usually takes a therapist or family members to spend hours manipulating these precious limbs to help their loved ones try to retain some function. This $15,000 machine has multiple settings and can work with just about any patient, even those who are paralyzed.

The Migun Therapeutic Massage Bed (The Lighthouse has two of them), are automatic massage beds that can work a person’s body almost as good as a trained professional. The rolling soft, pulsing massager can cover the body from the top of the head to the bottom of the feet, be set in nine massage configurations, depending upon which parts of the body need massaging the most.

There also is a professionally equipped hand massage room just waiting for a certified therapist to volunteer free time at the clinic. In addition there is a small kitchen across the hall from a beautiful little dining room and the Lees plan on providing nutritional education and cooking classes.

Food for the soul can be obtained by using either of two, gorgeous and comfy meditation/ prayer rooms.

The more athletically able people can work out on a full elliptical trainer, treadmill, advanced stationary bicycle, a special back exerciser and a huge universal machine that provides resistance training for nine different areas of the body.

And all of this is just upstairs.

In the basement is a full, open meeting room that can easily seat 30-40 people, but includes billiards table, a children’s play corner with toys and dolls, and plenty of comfortable chairs, including a leather couch with two built-in leg recliners (yes, Shirley even got that one at the Goodwill).

“We see the basement area as an all purpose meeting and recreation area with a full kitchen, but will not open for public use until we have added disability access ramp and fire exits,” Haskell Lee said.

What Shirley and Haskell Lee need now is simple. They need volunteers to come and help the people who will use these facilities. The Lees need people able to facilitate fitness training, nutrition education, anti-smoking cessation, alcohol and substance abuse, and all manners of rehabilitation specialists. They also need volunteer carpentry and building remodeling assistance to finish restoration of the basement.

The Lighthouse Wellness Center is for the poor and needy and those without insurance or whose insurance will no longer pay for access to professional rehabilitation equipment or pay for the equipment to be placed in the home. They will not ask for any compensation for the first two weeks that people use their facilities, but will ask for some donation or compensation thereafter. They will never turn away someone who needs to use this equipment to maintain their health. But they know that ultimately, the community will have to help them keep this health mission alive.

The Lees faith in God and His Goodness has led them to build The Lighthouse Wellness Center. Their faith in the goodness of humanity and the community leads them to believe that they will get the volunteer facilitators they need and the people who will benefit from it will come.

“God has provided so much for our family,” Shirley Lee said. “And despite the difficulties, we still have our son with us. All we want to do now is give some of these blessings back to the needy people of North Omaha.”

To learn more about The Lighthouse Wellness Center, call 402-933-4311 or 402-991-8878.
When Blood Cells Bend
Understanding Sickle Cell Disease

For people who don’t suspect they carry the sickle cell gene, having a baby with sickle cell disease can be heartbreaking. The illness is inherited and lasts a lifetime. Fifty years ago, half of children born with sickle cell disease died by age 10. Now they’re living into their 40s and 50s, thanks to therapies developed with NIH support. Researchers are now working on promising new treatments.

Sickle cell disease is a serious disorder in which the body makes red blood cells that have a sickle shape—like the letter C. These stiff, misshaped cells can lead to painful episodes, serious infections, organ damage and long-term anemia.

By some estimates, 70,000 to 100,000 Americans have sickle cell disease. Most are African Americans, although the disease also occurs in Hispanic Americans and others. “It’s a rare disease in the U.S.,” says Dr. Gregory Kato, a sickle cell disease expert at NIH. “But sickle cell disease affects millions of people in Africa, as well as in Saudi Arabia, India, South America and other regions.” The sickle cell gene has an even broader reach. More than 2 million Americans—including 1 in 12 African Americans—carry 1 copy of the abnormal gene. They’re said to have sickle cell trait. While they don’t have sickle cell disease, they can still pass the flawed gene to their children. Sickle cell disease arises when you inherit 2 abnormal genes, 1 from each parent. The genes make a defective form of hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying protein in red blood cells. Affected cells collapse into a sickle shape. The sickled cells bunch together and reduce blood flow through your blood vessels. That can cause severe and sudden pain throughout the body and lead to stroke or organ damage from lack of oxygen. This medical emergency, called a sickle cell crisis, can be treated with pain medication and blood transfusions.

A blood test can show if you have sickle cell disease or the trait. All states now test newborns as part of their screening programs, so treatment can begin early. Severe sickle cell disease can be treated with a medicine called hydroxyurea. It helps to prevent red blood cells from sickling. Hydroxyurea doesn’t cure sickle cell disease, but it can make it milder. And it was recently shown to be safe and effective for very young children. “Although the treatment of sickle cell disease pain crisis hasn’t changed much since the discovery of the disease a hundred years ago, there are more new treatments now under investigation than in any time in history,” says Kato. “All clinical drug trials are always speculative. Most don’t work out, but some do. Biomedical scientists like us are working towards the future.”

If you have sickle cell disease, take steps to prevent and control its complications by maintaining a healthy lifestyle. If you’re at high risk of having a child with sickle cell anemia and are planning to have children, ask your health care professional about genetic counseling.
You don't have to stop eating chocolate cake or start running marathons to improve your health. Making small but steady changes in your eating and physical activity habits -- over time -- may help you lose weight if you need to, feel better, and improve your health. The information below can help you start to change your physical activity and eating habits. When you make changes to improve your health, you may also move your friends and family to do the same.

But the health benefits of getting fit and eating well are clear. Once you decide to lose weight, your loved ones may want to join you on your journey to better health.

**Am I risking my health by being overweight?**
Being overweight can be dangerous to your health. If you are overweight or obese, you are more likely to develop:
- type 2 diabetes
- high blood pressure
- heart disease
- certain forms of cancer.
You can help lower your risk for many health problems by losing weight. Losing 5 to 10 percent of your body weight can help improve your health. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, losing 10 to 20 pounds may help lower your blood pressure and cholesterol level. Slow and steady weight loss of 1/2 to 2 pounds per week is the safest way to lose weight.

**How do I start to lose weight and improve my health?**
To start towards a healthy weight and improve your health, try to:
- Be more physically active
- Eat healthier.

**Be more physically active**
Regular moderate-intensity physical activity can be fun and help you feel great. When you share physical activity with your friends and family, it can also be a social event. Make it your goal to try to do at least 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most, or better yet, all days of the week. You may need to be physically active for more than 30 minutes a day to help you lose and keep off extra weight.

**What is moderate-intensity activity?**
- walking 2 miles in 30 minutes
- bicycling 5 miles in 30 minutes
- dancing fast for 30 minutes

Sometimes starting and sticking with a physical activity program can be a challenge. Figuring out how to beat your physical activity roadblocks may make it easier for you to get and stay active.

Note: If you are a man and over age 40 or a woman and over age 50, or have chronic health problems such as heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, or obesity, talk to your health care provider before starting a vigorous physical activity program.

**Beat your physical activity roadblocks!**
If you do not have child care, try sharing physical activities such as walking, biking, or playing tag with your child each day.
If you do not have time or are too busy to be physically active, try doing 10 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity three times a day, or putting more energy than normal into activities like housework, yardwork, and playing with the kids.
If you do not like, or do not want to exercise, know that doing something you enjoy such as dancing to the radio, or planning active outings with a friend, family member or group all count!

If you do not feel safe being physically active in your neighborhood, form a group of people to walk, jog, or bike together, working out with videos in your home, or walking in a shopping mall.

**Eat healthier**
When you begin to change your eating habits to improve your health, try to:
- Make healthier food choices
- Eat just enough food for you.

**Make healthier food choices**
A healthy eating plan includes a wide variety of foods from five food groups. Let the Food Guide Pyramid help guide your food choices. Use the Food Guide Pyramid to guide the number of daily servings you eat from each food group. A range of serving numbers is given for each Pyramid food group.
- The smaller number is for people who eat about 1,600 calories a day, such as women who are not physically active.
- Active women and most men need about 2,200 calories a day and should choose a mid-range number of servings.
- The larger number is for people who eat about 2,800 calories a day, such as active men.
Improving your eating plan may take time. Changing favorite foods may be one of the most difficult parts. To enjoy tasty, lower-fat versions of some favorite foods, try the suggestions listed in this publication.

Children, teenagers, and adults under age 25 should choose 3 daily servings from the milk, yogurt, and cheese group to meet nutritional needs.

Eat just enough for you.
To lose weight, learn to eat fewer calories. Do this by selecting foods that are lower in fat and calories from each food group.

A healthy eating plan calls for making healthy food choices and eating just enough for you. Larger servings of food have more calories. Eating more calories than your body needs leads to weight gain.

Learning about the serving sizes of foods can help you eat just enough for you. Try to measure your food for a few days. This can help you learn to recognize what one serving of a food, such as 1/2 cup of rice, looks like on your plate. See also: Portion Sizes.

To lose weight, learn to eat fewer calories. Do this by selecting foods that are lower in fat and calories from each food group. For example, choose low-fat cheese and extra lean meat. Also, choose plenty of vegetables. They are lower in calories and fat than other foods and can help you feel full.

Lower fat versions of favorite foods
• Instead of fried chicken, try baked, roasted, broiled, grilled, or oven-fried chicken with the skin removed.
• Instead of ham hocks, salt pork or fatback to flavor vegetables, try onions, garlic, low-sodium chicken broth or bouillon, smoked turkey, turkey bacon, or turkey ham. (These meats are high in salt, so use just a little bit.)
• Instead of regular ground beef, try extra lean ground beef or lean ground turkey breast.
• Instead of french fries, try mashed potatoes made with nonfat milk, a baked potato topped with a vegetable or fruit salsa, or a salad.
• Instead of sour cream, try low fat or nonfat sour cream or plain yogurt, or low fat cream cheese.

Instead of salt, try spices, herbs, lemon, lime, or vinegar. (Salt is not fattening, but it may contribute to high blood pressure in some people).

Do I need to drink milk?
A healthy eating plan includes a variety of foods that provides all of the nutrients the body needs. Milk is a good source of calcium. If you cannot digest lactose (the sugar found in milk), there are many ways you can get the calcium that milk offers, without drinking regular milk.

• Drink low-fat or nonfat "lactose-reduced" milk or calcium-fortified soy-based beverages or orange juice
• Choose low-fat yogurt or reduced fat hard cheeses like low-fat cheddar
• Eat dark leafy vegetables like collard greens or kale
• Eat canned fish with soft bones like salmon.

Keeping your new habits
The path to improving your eating and physical activity habits is not easy. But don’t give up. Remember, sensible eating and physical activity habits, followed over time, are key to a healthy body, mind, and spirit!
Community-Based Research

"Can University and Community Work Together"

Moving research beyond classic laboratory or medical settings into neighborhoods raises eyebrows in conventional educational circles. When faculty engage in community-based research, controversial questions arise:

- What constitutes scholarship (knowledge) versus service or education?
- Which outcomes and measures meet the rigorous standards of the review process of the educational institution?
- How can the work of a individual professor be figured out in the time they have allotted to do it?

Answers to these questions will encourage greater faculty (professors) participation and expand grant-makers' interest in funding scholarship for this new approach to research.

What is Community-Based Research?

This shared approach incorporates community participation into conducting research with four common features: Investigators:

- Address social, political, cultural, and economic systems to change health behaviors and outcomes;
- Engage community members in choosing research topics, developing projects, collecting data, and interpreting and giving out the results;
- Utilize both qualitative and quantitative research methods; and
- Place a high priority on converting findings into solutions and new practices and policies.

Advocates argue that a community-based approach to medical research has benefits for both the community and medical science.

Community-based research is grounded in the power of interdisciplinary (involving different subjects of study) and interprofessional collaborations—both within and outside of the university—that target health care disparities due to differences in quality of care based on race, ethnicity, or social and economic status. Through brand new partnerships, community health researchers and community leaders, such as public health personnel, social workers, grassroots advocates, religious leaders, educators, and business people, are finding measurable improvements in the well being of community members.

Needs and Benefits to the Public

Despite an overall trend of better health for people in the United States, health care disparities remain a firmly held problem. Health and health care differences for racial and ethnic minority groups or those of low social economic status result in shorter life spans and higher rates for many diseases (e.g., cancer, asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, birth defects, and infant mortality). The federal government has concluded that racial and ethnic minorities receive lower quality and worse access to care. As the United States continues to grow and diversify, disparities are affecting ever-larger parts of our country. National Institutes of Health funding is an important source of financial support for community-based research with new program announcements becoming available every year.

Benefits to community and medicine from community-engaged research include:

- The development and diversity of the health workforce;
- The delivery of quality health care;
- The relevance of research and its translation into practice and policy; and
- The health and economic vitality of communities.

How Do Community-Based Researchers Approach Their Work?

Community-based researchers frame questions from social, economic, or political point of views to engage community members as partners. What does that mean in practice? Typically, the community participates in a needs assessment to identify specific health issues they would like to see addressed by building a stronger community support system. Community ownership continues to grow as the project proceeds. Participants write or translate health education materials, build a group of patient recruiters within the community, and even invest in office space and computers for data collection and storage. As the project ends, the community shows its ownership by sharing in the evaluation of the project, sharing of the results, and the determination of the next steps to be taken.

With this approach, community members put together their own capacity to improve their health and health care. Outcomes translate into long term gains. Activities also can help repair trust and raise the profile of health professions in communities that have been previously underserved. For these reasons, community-based research is being increasingly recommended as a strategy to address health care disparities.

Challenges for Medical Faculty

Community-based research is an intense, complex, and time-consuming approach to research. Because researchers learn about their research topics through the community's needs assessment, a researcher frequently can't anticipate the full scope of their project until they have already invested a significant amount of time and effort. Further, the research may require quantitative, qualitative, or both, which means the researcher must be experienced with a variety of methods. Additionally, community-based researchers need to be trained or experienced at community outreach, interpersonal relationship-building, and interdisciplinary organizational skills with flexibility, and stamina to conduct long term projects that often unfold in unanticipated yet exciting ways.

Institutional Benefits

Organizational leadership that recognizes the value of aligning the health of an academic medical center with the health of its surrounding communities. Institutional advantages include the ability to:

- Demonstrate tangible community health gains,
- Expand networks within the institution, across disciplines, and with external entities; and
- Create opportunities to strengthen the education pipeline that brings diversity to the health professions workforce.

The many complex and centuries-old issues that have resulted in health care disparities in our country call for new and innovative research. Community-based research holds promise as just such an innovation. Its power for change emerges from a new lens of cooperation between universities and communities. The continued success of community-based research depends, in large part, on the willingness of medical schools and grant makers to expand their recognition of research to coincide with community-based research practices.
Community Forum on Findings from a Sexually Transmitted Infection Study in North Omaha

When & Where:

April 17, 5:30 - 7:00 pm  Malcolm X Center, 3448 Pinkney St.
April 19, 4:30 - 6:00 pm  Florence Library, 2920 Bondesson St.
April 20, 4:30 - 6:00 pm  Charles Washington Library, 2868 Ames Ave.
April 30, 12:00 - 1:30 pm  Charles Drew Health Clinic, 2915 Grant St.

Sponsored by: The University of Nebraska Medical Center
College of Public Health and Douglas County Health Department

Sack lunch will be provided for first 50 attendees
Everyone in the community is invited to attend

STD
What You Need To Know

- STDs are BIG health problems in the neighborhood
- Teens and young adults:
  - Have sex at a younger age
  - Have multiple sex partners
  - Have sex with older partners for social status or financial gain
  - Have sex without protection
  - Are afraid of being judged
  - May not know they have the disease and feel they are invincible
  - Do not seek testing or treatment due to lack of trust and confidentiality
- A positive test for an STD increases chance for contracting HIV
- Alcohol, drugs, club environment, peer-pressure, and a carefree atmosphere increases risk of getting STDs
- COMMON STDs ARE PREVENTABLE

STD
What You Can Do

- Talk to your teen about the facts
- Contact any clinic for more information
- TESTING AND TREATMENT available at little or no cost at these clinics:

Charles Drew Health Clinic
Main: 2915 Grant Street
Phone: 402.451.3553
Ext. 2263 or 2225

Branch: Benson Community Health Clinic
NW Radial Highway
Phone: 402.556.9242

Douglas County STD Clinic
111 S. 41st Street
Phone: 402.444.7112

Creighton Magic Clinic at Sierra Francis House
1111 N. 17th Street
Phone: 888.218.4692

UNMC Respect Clinic
5030 Ames Ave
Phone: 402.595.2280

www.unmc.edu/publichealth/epidemiology
Babies are dying! But they don’t have to...

Black babies die nearly **two times** as often as white babies before their first birthday.

This map shows the infant mortality in our neighborhoods.

Visit to learn more:
connectionsproject.net
www.facebook.com/theconnectionsproject
www.marchofdimes.com

Through YOU connecting, we all make a difference.

**The Connections Project**

Plan your pregnancy!
- Abstinence
- Birth control
- Condoms

www.plannedparenthood.org
877-811-7526

Pregnant? Take care!
Prenatal care is important.
www.omahahealthystart.org
402-455-2229

Protect your baby!
Safely put your baby to sleep.
www.keepingbabiessafe.org
www.healthychildren.org/pdf/-SIDSparentssafe sleepy.pdf

Need to talk?
www.chdomaha.org 402-502-9788
www.essentialps.org 402-554-1000
www.amendgroup.com

NOAH Monthly paper is compiled and distributed by North Omaha Area Health Inc. The University of Nebraska Medical Center is one of many sponsors that support the publication of this paper. Questions or comments please write the Editor Ira Combs at 5050 Ames Ave Omaha Nebraska 68104, or email icombs@unmc.edu, or call 402-250-2370.
Role of Fathers,  
Topic of February Community Forum  

By Fran Higgins  

Fathers. What role do they play in families and, particularly, in supporting healthy pregnancy? Find out what a nationally renowned expert has discovered through his research at the next Connections Project Community-Based Learning Forum, Monday, Feb. 27, from 5 to 7:30 p.m. at North High School, 4410 N 36th St.

Waldo E. Johnson Jr., PhD, is an associate professor at The University of Chicago in the School of Social Service Administration (SSA). For three years he was the director of the Center for the Study of Race, Politics and Culture (CSRPC) at the University of Chicago. Dr. Johnson’s research focus is on male roles and involvement in African American families, nonresident fathers in fragile families, and the physical and psychosocial health statuses of African American males.

Throughout his successful research career, Dr. Johnson has used his results to guide the formulation and implementation of local, state and national policy to advance the health and wellbeing of African American families. Dr. Johnson is a member of the Ford Foundation Scholars Network on Masculinity and the Wellbeing of African American Men, and is on the editorial board of Children and Youth Services Review. He is on the steering committee for the 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys. This is a national research, program intervention, and public policy initiative led by the 21st Century and Ford Foundation that aims to raise visibility of issues facing Black Men and Boys nationally and in select communities in a way that informs substantive action and positive change.

The Connections Project, funded by the State Department of Health and Human Services and by private donors, is a partnership of community members, UNMC faculty, staff and students, and state and county personnel devoted to implementing successful community-based strategies that improve birth outcomes in the African-American community and ultimately reduce disparities in birth outcomes.

For more information, including streaming videos from past forums, visit the Connections Project website at http://connectionsproject.net.

RESPECT STD Clinic

Location: Baker Place Clinic, 5050 Ames Ave, Omaha, NE 68107  
(in the Northwest corner of Baker’s Place strip mall)

Time: Mondays 5:30-7 PM

Call (402) 559-2666 for an appointment!

Walk-ins Welcome!

Cost: $15, No Insurance Needed!
Fee waivers available, you won’t be turned away because you can’t pay!

Testing, education, and treatment (medicine) for chlamydia, gonorrhea, HIV, herpes, syphilis, and trichomonas included for $15.
Power to End Stroke Events

June 2nd-The American Heart Association “Power to End Stroke” Ambassadors Council will be hosting the 3rd annual Power Walk on Saturday, June 2nd from 9am to 1pm. This year the walk from Fontenelle Park to Adams Park will feature live entertainment at Adams along with food, raffle prizes and much more. Once again a traveling trophy will be given out to the team that enrolls the most participants.

May 19th-The American Heart Association “Power to End Stroke” Ambassadors Council will be hosting the 2nd annual Power thon featuring Latin and American dance workouts on Saturday, May 19th. Activities will be held at the North High School gym 36th and Ames Ave. from 10 am to 12pm. with free blood pressure checks from 9am to 11am. The event is free and open to the public.

For more information to contact: Wayne Houston at 402 595-1365 or Theola Cooper at 402 444-3367.
Cancer 101
(Second part of a two part article)
Are there ways to prevent cancer?

This risk of developing cancer can be reduced by:

- Not using tobacco products- (The most consistent finding, over decades of research, is the strong association between tobacco use and cancers of many sites. Hundreds of studies have confirmed this. Lung cancer death rates in the United States have mirrored smoking patterns, with increases in smoking followed by dramatic increases in lung cancer death rates and, more recently, decreases in smoking followed by decreases in lung cancer death rates in men.)
- choosing foods with less fat and eating more vegetables, fruits, and whole grains (Obesity is associated with colon, breast, endometrial, and possibly other cancers)
- avoiding excessive alcohol drinking (Excessive alcohol consumption is associated with increased risk of oral, esophageal, breast, and other cancers)
- exercising regularly and maintaining a lean weight (Physical inactivity is associated with increased risk of colon, breast, and possibly other cancers)
- avoiding the harmful rays of the sun, using sunscreen, and wearing clothing that protects the skin (Over exposure to harmful rays is associated skin cancer)
- Avoiding exposure to ionizing radiation and ultraviolet radiation, certain occupational and chemical exposures, and infectious agents
- talking with a doctor about the possible benefits of drugs proven to reduce the risk of certain cancers

Although many risk factors can be avoided, some, such as inherited conditions, are unavoidable. However, it is helpful to be aware of them. People who have an increased likelihood of developing cancer can help protect themselves by avoiding risk factors whenever possible and by getting regular checkups so that, if cancer develops, it is likely to be found and treated early.

What are some of the common signs and symptoms of cancer?

Cancer can cause a variety of symptoms. However, it is important to get regular screenings because sometimes there are no symptoms until later stages of cancer. Possible signs of cancer include the following:

- new thickening or lump in the breast or any other part of the body
- a sore that does not heal
- nagging cough or hoarseness
- changes in bowel or bladder habits
- persistent indigestion or difficulty swallowing
- unexplained changes in weight
- unusual bleeding or discharge

When these or other symptoms occur, they are not always caused by cancer. They can be caused by infections, benign tumors, or other problems. It is important to see a health provider about any of these symptoms or about other physical changes. Only a health provider can make a diagnosis. A person with these or other symptoms should not wait to feel pain because early cancer usually does not cause pain.

Why is cancer screening important?

Treatment is often more effective when cancer is detected early. Screening exams, such as sigmoidoscopy or the fecal occult blood test, mammography, and the Pap test, can detect precancerous conditions, which can be treated before they turn into cancer, and early-stage cancer.

What is meant by cancer "stage"?

Staging describes the extent or severity of an individual's cancer based on the extent of the original (primary) tumor and the extent of spread in the body. Staging is important because:
- Staging helps the doctor plan a person's treatment.
- The stage can be used to estimate the person's prognosis (likely outcome or course of the disease).
- Knowing the stage is important in identifying clinical trials (research studies) that may be suitable for a particular patient.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage 0</td>
<td>Carcinoma in situ (early cancer that is present only in the layer of cells in which it began).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage I, Stage II, and Stage III</td>
<td>Higher numbers indicate more extensive disease: greater tumor size, and/or spread of the cancer to nearby lymph nodes and/or organs adjacent to the primary tumor.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stage IV</td>
<td>The cancer has spread to another organ.</td>
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How is cancer treated?

Cancer treatment can include surgery, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and biological therapy. The doctor may use one method or a combination of methods, depending on the stage, type and location of the cancer, whether the disease has spread, the patient's age and general health, and other factors.

For information and questions on

Breast Cancer call Jackie Hill 402-595-3807
Prostate and Lung Cancer Call Ira Combs 402-595-1458
A TIP FROM A FORMER SMOKER

DO YOUR HEART A FAVOR. QUIT SMOKING.

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