

5 Signs You May Have Cancer

Everybody knows that the key to surviving cancer is to catch it early when it is still treatable. But cancer signs are often subtle and may mimic other, less serious conditions.

The question is: Which symptoms can you ignore and which need to be checked by a doctor?

Oncologist Herman Kattlove, M.D., former spokesperson for the American Cancer Society, tells Newsmax Health that the most important step in cancer diagnosis is proper screening.

This means pap smears and mammograms at recommended intervals for women, regular prostate screening for men, colonoscopy beginning at age 50 for everyone, and chest CT scans for smokers.

But there are certain symptoms that people might notice that could be cancer and should never be ignored, says Dr. Kattlove.

1. Unexplained weight loss. Most people with cancer will lose weight at some point. If there is no known cause for weight loss of 10 pounds or more, it may be the first sign of cancer. This happens most often with cancers of the pancreas, stomach, esophagus, or lung.

2. Pain. See your doctor if you have a headache that does not go away or have persistent back pain that doesn't go away with rest.

3. Skin changes. Aside from skin cancers, other malignancies can cause darker-looking skin, yellowish skin and eyes (indicating jaundice), reddened skin, and itching or excessive hair growth.

4. Sores that do not heal. Skin cancers may bleed and look like sores that don't heal. A long-lasting sore in the mouth

may indicate oral cancer and should be examined.

5. Unusual bleeding. Coughing up blood may be a sign of lung cancer. Dark colored blood in the stool may signal colon or rectal cancer. Cancer of the cervix or the lining of the uterus may cause abnormal vaginal bleeding. Blood in the urine may be a sign of bladder or kidney cancer. And blood discharge from the nipple can signal breast cancer. “The best advice is if you notice any major changes in the way your body works or how you feel, let a doctor know,” says Dr. Kattlove. “It’s best to err on the side of caution.”

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