



**CHR Dancer**



## **Artist Statement** **CHR Dancer**

For years Native people have used dance as a form of prayer and as a way to celebrate life. There is a movement among Native America to raise awareness of cancer. It began in 1993, with the Pink Shawl Project, to raise awareness of Breast cancer. Since then, it has been adapted by the Native People's Circle of Hope to raise awareness of other types of cancer.

I wanted to portray my CHR dancer as a woman we could all picture ourselves knowing. She could be a friend or a mother, a sister or an aunt who through her dance is honoring her people. With her bright yellow shawl she honors the spirit of Hope, while the many colors of her ribbon fringe represent the different types of cancer.

*Cassandra Leigh Darrough*  
Paiute-Shoshone  
April 19, 2008

## Section 4



# Understanding Cancer Basics

**GOALS**

Participants will learn how a cancer diagnosis is made. Emotional responses to a cancer diagnosis and ways to provide support will be discussed. Participants will also learn common medical words used when describing cancer, a cancer diagnosis, and cancer treatment.

**OBJECTIVES**

At the end of this section, each participant will be able to:

**STATE** how a cancer diagnosis is made

**UNDERSTAND** the importance of cancer site, grade, and stage

**DISCUSS** the emotional effects of a cancer diagnosis

**IDENTIFY** ways to provide comfort and support for people diagnosed with cancer and their caregivers

**Think about what you can do or say or how to support someone who has been diagnosed with cancer. Remember he or she is not cancer itself but a person living with the disease called cancer.**

What traditional stories provide hope and courage for a person to live well along their journey of being diagnosed with cancer?



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**Cancer Basics**

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## Cancer Basics

# Cancer Basics

## *Check Your Understanding*

*Check Your Understanding*

	TRUE	FALSE
1. Cancer is one disease.		
2. Tumors can be benign or malignant.		
3. Cancer cells rob nutrients from nearby tissues and destroy normal cells or push them out of the way.		
4. Cancer cells grow without control or order.		
5. A benign tumor means you have cancer.		
6. Stage is a medical term used to describe how far a cancer has spread.		
7. If someone has breast cancer and it spreads to the lungs, the person then has breast cancer and lung cancer.		
8. A doctor can tell if a person has cancer by looking at an x-ray.		
9. Malignant tumors have the ability to spread to other parts of the body.		
10. A cancer diagnosis does not mean you are going to die from cancer.		
11. Cancer can only be definitely diagnosed by looking at a sample of tissue under a microscope.		
12. Cancer can occur anywhere in the body.		

*Through sharing our stories and combining our knowledge, we can understand the disease of cancer.*

## Cancer Basics

*Cancer is diagnosed by taking a tissue sample, called a biopsy, and looking at those cells under a microscope.*

*When cancer is found and treated early, cure or remission is possible.*

# Understanding Cancer Basics



Welcome, we are glad to join with you in learning about cancer. Many of us are concerned about cancer. When people hear the word 'cancer' a lot of thoughts and feelings come to mind. We may know family, friends or people in our communities who have experienced cancer, and we are aware of some of the ways in which a diagnosis of cancer may affect their lives and our lives. We wonder how to make meaning of the experience of cancer.

Through sharing our stories and combining our wisdom and knowledge, we can learn ways to understand cancer. When cancer is found and treated early, cure or remission is possible.

**In the words of a cancer survivor, "A cancer diagnosis is NOT a death sentence."**

Today many people who have been diagnosed and treated for cancer are living well. Within the story of cancer we may discover new meaning, changing the way we embrace our life journey.

## What is cancer?

**Cancer** is not just one disease, but a group of over 100 different diseases. Cancer occurs when cells divide and form more cells without control or order. This abnormal cell growth creates a mass of new tissue. Every part of the body is made of cells. Normal cells divide to produce more cells at the rate the body needs them. The many, many cells in our body must divide numerous times a day. This process is carefully controlled by our genes.

If cells keep dividing when new cells are not needed, a mass forms. This mass of tissue is called a growth or **tumor**. It can be benign or malignant. **Benign tumors** are not cancer - they do not spread to other parts of the body and are not usually a threat to life. They may be removed because of their size or if they are bothering a person. Benign tumors usually do not grow back after they are removed.

**Malignant tumors** are cancer cells which divide without control or order. Cancer cells take nutrients from nearby tissue and destroy normal cells or push them out of the way. Cancer cells can also enter the blood stream and/or lymph system and spread to other parts of the body. This spread of cancer cells to other parts of the body is called **metastasis**.

## How is a cancer diagnosis made?

A cancer diagnosis can only be made by looking at tissue from a **biopsy** under a microscope. A biopsy is the removal of a small sample of tissue. Under a microscope, cancer cells look different than normal cells in size, shape, and how they are arranged.

## Cancer Basics

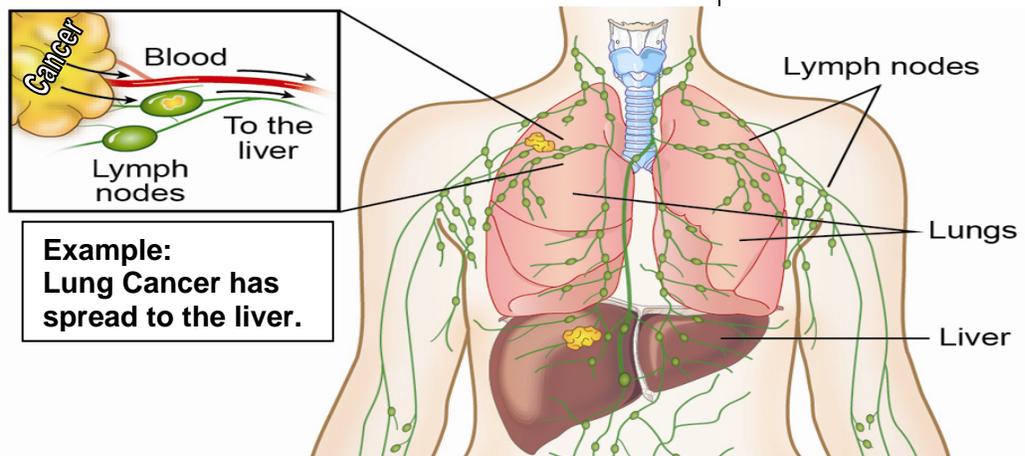
### *Types of Cancer*

*There are over 100 different types of cancer.*

# Primary Cancer Site

## Where did the cancer start?

Most cancers are identified by the organ where they first begin to grow which is called the **primary tumor site** or **primary site**. When cancer spreads or metastasizes, the new tumor has the same type of cells as the original (primary) tumor. If lung cancer spreads to the liver, the lung cancer is said to have metastasized to the liver, and the tumor in the liver is called metastatic lung cancer. The person's diagnosis is lung cancer with metastasis to the liver. The person does not have lung cancer and liver cancer.



## What type of cancer is it?

There are over 100 different types of cancer. In addition to the primary organ site, cancers are described by the types of cells that become malignant or cancer. It is important to know the stage, grade, and type of cancer to determine the best treatment.

### There are six main groups:

**Carcinomas** begin in the epithelium, the body's skin and tissues that line internal organs. Eighty to 90% of cancers are carcinomas.

**Sarcomas** start to grow in bone, fat, muscle, nerve, joint, blood vessel, or deep skin tissues. Sarcomas are given different names depending upon the type of tissue where they begin to grow. For example, osteosarcoma starts in the bone, chondrosarcoma begins in the cartilage, leiomyosarcoma begins in the smooth muscle and liposarcomas are cancer tumors of the fat tissue. Kaposi sarcoma may develop in people who are infected with HIV and is a cancer formed by cells similar to those lining blood or lymph vessels.

**Mixed Tumors** are made of sarcoma and carcinoma cells.

**Lymphomas** start in the lymph nodes or lymph tissue.

**Leukemias** are cancers of the white blood cells produced in the blood-forming tissues - bone marrow, lymph nodes, and spleen.

**Myelomas** start in the plasma cells made in the bone marrow.

### *Remember...*

*cancer is just a word used to describe a disease, it is not the person.*

## Cancer Basics

### *Tumor Grade*

*Cancer cells look different than normal cells in size, shape, and arrangement.*



## Tumor Grade

### How aggressive is the cancer?

Tumor grade describes how closely the cancer cells look like normal cells of the same type. Tumor cells are well differentiated when they look and function similarly to normal cells of the same type. Poorly differentiated and undifferentiated tumor cells look abnormal and disorganized. A specially trained doctor, called a pathologist, uses the numbers 1 to 4 to grade a tumor.

*The standard tumor grades are:*

**GRADE 1** - Well differentiated

**GRADE 2** - Moderately well differentiated

**GRADE 3** - Poorly differentiated

**GRADE 4** - Undifferentiated

The grade (or differentiation) of a tumor refers to how fast the cells are growing or how aggressive the tumor is.

**Low grade tumors** have well differentiated cells, are slow growing and less aggressive.

**High grade tumors** have poorly differentiated cells, are fast growing and more aggressive.

Tumor grade also helps determine **prognosis**, the probable outcome or chance of recovery from the cancer.

A breast cancer is “poorly differentiated” if the tissue does not look like normal breast tissue. It grows faster and is more difficult to treat than a breast cancer that is “well differentiated”, one that looks like normal breast tissue.

Information about tumor grade helps health care providers plan the best treatment.

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**Cancer Basics**


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*Stage of Cancer*

# Stage of Cancer



## How far has the cancer spread?

The stage of the disease describes how far the cancer has spread beyond the organ in which it first started to grow. Stage is determined using selected tests and procedures that may include: surgery, various imaging techniques, blood tests, and biopsies.

### Four common stages of cancer are:

**IN-SITU** - Cancer cells are found in one tissue area and have not invaded normal surrounding tissue.

**LOCAL** - Cancer is found only in the organ where it started to grow.

**REGIONAL** - Cancer has spread to the surrounding tissues or lymph nodes.

**DISTANT** - Cancer has spread to other organs and systems of the body.

A cancer in-situ may be completely removed with surgery. In this case the patient is cured and needs no further cancer treatment. Depending upon the type of cancer, in-situ may require surgery, radiation treatment or hormonal treatment. A cancer with distant metastases is more advanced and more difficult to treat.

Another system of staging uses the words Tumor (T), Nodes (N), and Metastasis (M) with a number score. The stage of each cancer is very specific to each type of cancer.

**TUMOR (T)** - the size of the cancer growth and how far it has spread into nearby tissue.

**NODES (N)** - how many lymph nodes in the region of the cancer tumor have cancer cells in them.

**METASTASIS (M)** - Cancer is found in distant parts of the body far from the primary site of origin.

As information about a person's cancer is gathered, a number score is noted for T, N, and M. Zero (0) means no evidence of cancer, while numbers increasing in size (1-4) mean larger or more disease. An "X" indicates the exact status is not known.

*Staging is an important part of making an accurate diagnosis and developing the best treatment plan.*

## Cancer Basics

### *Stage of Cancer*

*Stage 1 cancer means the cancer has been diagnosed early and there is a good prognosis.*

**Knowing the stage of cancer helps medical doctors to develop the best treatment plan.**

Medical manuals are available that describe what the TNM numbers mean for the different kinds of cancer. Because there are many TNM combinations, they are grouped into four stages (I-IV). Stage 1 cancer means the cancer has been diagnosed early and with treatment the person has a good prognosis. Stage 4 or Stage IV means the cancer has spread to another part of the body.

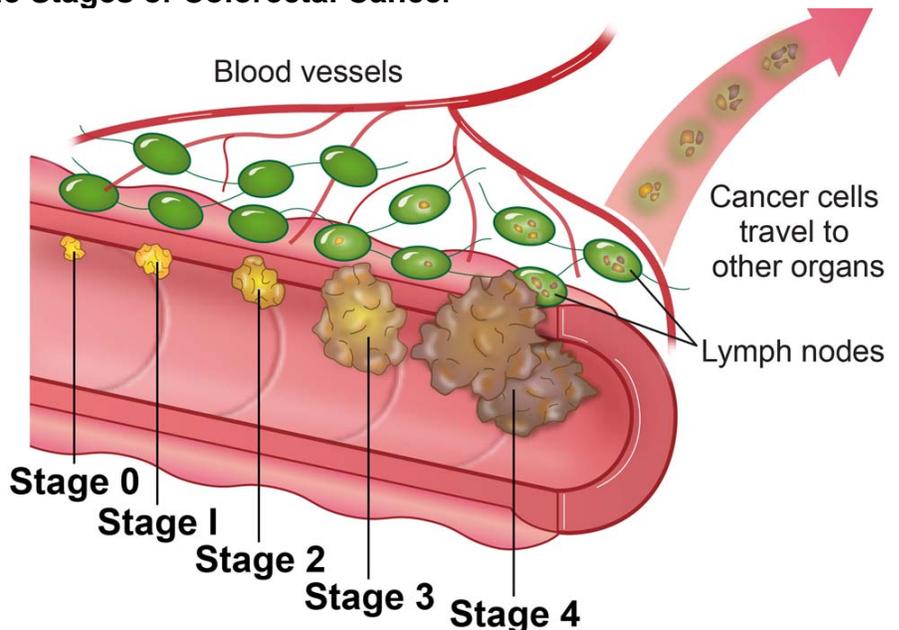
#### **Examples using the TNM system to stage colon cancer:**

A 51 year old male has colon cancer. The tumor has not invaded the layer of tissue just below the lining of the colon (T1), no lymph nodes show cancer cells (N0) and no distant metastases are found (M0). He has Stage I colon cancer.

A 62 year old female has colon cancer. The tumor has invaded deeply into the tissues of the colon (T3). Three regional lymph nodes are positive for cancer cells (N1). There is no evidence of distant metastasis (M0). She has Stage 3 colon cancer.

A 70 year old male has colon cancer that has spread or metastasized to his liver. Cancer with metastasis (spread) to another part of the body is Stage IV. The tumor may be any size, with any number of lymph nodes: Any T (tumor), Any N (nodes), combined with M1 (metastasis) is Stage 4.

#### **The Stages of Colorectal Cancer**



Photos in this section from Understanding Cancer adapted by Rebecca Linskens Cancer Health Disparities Initiative at the UW Carbone Cancer Center

# Providing Comfort and Support



You may know someone who has been diagnosed with cancer, or you may have watched a movie and heard how people responded to their diagnosis of cancer.

People respond to a cancer diagnosis in many ways.

Shock, confusion, anger, grief, sadness, disappointment, despair, disbelief, denial, and fear are all common reactions. Each of us has our own personal way of responding to a situation

## How can we help?

Although cancer is an individual diagnosis, no one needs to feel like they have to experience cancer alone. It takes a lot of heart and courage to cope with cancer. Cancer not only affects the person with cancer but also family and friends.

Sometimes people refer to cancer as the 'Big C' or the 'C word'. Remember there are 3 simple letters at the beginning of the word cancer...CAN. Together, we **can** make a difference.

Think about other supportive "C" words:

comfort, cope, caring, compassion, communication, community, cuddle, chocolate, chuckle, corazon (Spanish for heart), courage, connections and Community Health Representatives to name a few.

## Things you can do when someone you know has cancer:

- Talk story. Focus on the person, not the disease.
- Share feelings, laughter and tears.
- Share silence, just be present. We are human beings; we don't always have to be human doings.
- Stay connected with the person.
- Bring a meal.
- Go with the person to their medical appointments if they would like you to go.
- Run errands. Shop for food.
- Spend time with their kids and grandkids.
- Sing together, make music.
- Pray together.
- Tell or read stories of hope and courage.
- Play games or cards.
- Watch funny movies together; laughter is healing.
- Go for a walk together and enjoy nature.

*Check your Understanding* answers from page 4-3: 1)F, 2)T, 3)T, 4)T, 5)F, 6)T, 7)F, 8)F, 9)T, 10)T, 11)T,12)T.

*Remember, you are not alone. You are part of a caring community of family and friends.*

