

Medshield: Early warning signs of male cancers

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Due to differences in biology and lifestyle, men and women face different cancer risks. You may assume you do not need to visit a doctor for minor health issues, but cancer symptoms are often vague. For example, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men but has some of the least apparent symptoms.

According to the National Cancer Registry ([NCR](#)) report, men's top five invasive cancers are prostate, colorectal, lung, non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and melanoma. Aside from prostate cancer, cancers affecting only men include testicular and penile cancer.

Knowing about these cancers, recognising the warning signs and making healthy lifestyle choices are crucial for successful treatment and lowering cancer risk. Below is a list of [early warning signs](#) of male cancers to look out for. Having one or more of these symptoms does not mean you have cancer, but if they are consistent, it is a good idea to consult a medical professional for proper evaluation.



Early warning signs of male cancers

1. **Abnormal lump** – If you feel a mass or lump right below your skin, it may be a sign of cancer. Lumps typically appear in the breast, testicles, lymph nodes and soft tissues, like tendons and ligaments.
2. **Changes in your testicles** – If you notice changes in your testicles, such as swelling, increased weight or changes in size, it may be a sign of testicular cancer. This type of cancer is more common among young and middle-aged men diagnosed with testicular cancer.
3. **Changes in your restroom habits** – If you experience signs like blood in your urine, blood in your stool, or changes in your bowel habits, it may be a sign of bladder or prostate cancer.
4. **Changes in your skin** – If you work long hours outside in the sun or have a history of sunburns that turn into blisters, always monitor your skin closely. What you may think are sunburns from working in the sun may be skin cancer. Look for unusual bleeding, scaling or sores on your skin that do not heal. Other signs include changes in warts, moles and freckles.
5. **Persistent cough** – A cough lasting more than three weeks indicates something's wrong and could be a sign of lung

cancer. Persistent wheezing, shortness of breath or coughing up blood are symptoms that require medical attention.

6. **Changes in your mouth** – You need to pay close attention to changes inside your mouth. If left untreated, white patches inside your mouth or tongue may develop into oral cancer. Additionally, if you experience sores, unexplained bleeding, numbness or tenderness in the area around your mouth, it's wise to seek medical advice.
7. **Consistent pain** – Back pain, a headache that won't go away, and stomach pains are all symptoms your doctor needs to know about. Regardless of location, persistent pain can be the first sign that something's wrong.



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Self-care and lifestyle choices

As cancer prevention information continues to develop, it's well-accepted that lifestyle choices affect the chances of getting cancer. For men, adopting behaviours that promote a healthy lifestyle enhances physical fitness and contributes to a great immune system. Avoiding tobacco use, eating a healthy diet, maintaining a healthy weight, staying physically active, and protecting yourself from sun exposure all help reduce cancer risk. Embracing self-care and healthy lifestyle choices empowers men to take charge of their health, mitigate cancer risks and pave the way for a longer and more vibrant life.

Medshield covers oncology and facilitates access to care

According to [Cansa](#), cancer affects one in four South Africans through a diagnosis of family, friends, colleagues or self. As your healthcare partner for life, Medshield offers tailored and cost-effective cover regardless of your life stage. All Medshield benefit options have comprehensive oncology benefits. To qualify for the oncology benefits, members must register on the Oncology Management Programme with Icon, a network of oncology specialists offering quality cancer care across South Africa. Additionally, Medshield members have access to post-active treatment for 36 months.

Icon Oncology is the leading value-based and care-driven organisation in South Africa. In an environment of escalating healthcare costs that disadvantage most patients, many people with cancer are still not gaining access to quality cancer treatment fast enough. Icon puts the patient at the centre of care, reduces wastage and costs, and improves outcomes. Icon also connects members with organisations that can lend a helping hand and support them on their cancer journey.

Additionally, Icon has established a network of social support groups to ensure our members get the best possible care. The Icon solution is available with the support of Medshield, includes support protocols and integrates with evidence-based medicine. This solution means the patient receives quality, appropriate care at a reduced cost – ensuring the highest quality of care for the greatest number of patients.

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