

Cancer Screening: Reflective Questions

1. Why is cancer screening important?

- a. One of the benefits of screening is that it can detect cancer before you begin having symptoms. Early detection of cancer can make it easier to treat cancer because it is in its earlier stages. This can reduce your risk of dying from cancer.

2. What are some risk factors for cancer?

- a. Some risk factors for cancer are things we can change – our habits, diet, and lifestyle.
- b. Other risk factors for cancer are things we're born with that we can't change – for example, people who are assigned female at birth are more likely to develop breast cancer, and those with external male genitalia are more likely to develop prostate cancer. Cancers can sometimes run in families, so if your blood relatives have cancer, that also increases your risk for developing cancer.

3. When should you talk to your doctor?

- a. Always talk to your doctor about cancer screening if you have any family history of cancer or if a doctor has ever told you that you had an abnormal cancer screening in the past. If any of the risk factors in this presentation sound like they might apply to you, or if you aren't sure if they do, talk to your doctor about your risk factors to find out which cancer screenings would be best for you. Some cancers may be caused by other risk factors too, so it's important to be open and honest with your doctor.

4. What can you do in between screenings to reduce your risk of getting cancer?

- a. Ways that you can reduce your risk of cancer include eating fruits and vegetables every day, avoiding fatty foods, getting 30 minutes of exercise per day, stopping tobacco use, and reducing alcohol use.

5. What are some cancers that you are recommended to start screening at a certain age?

- a. Breast Cancer: By age 50, or 40 for those with risk factors, patients who are assigned female at birth should begin yearly mammograms.
- b. Cervical Cancer: Starting at age 21, patients should have a PAP smear every three years. After age 30, patients may get a PAP smear every 5 years as long as the patient's past PAP smears have shown normal, healthy cells and they are screened for HPV along with their PAP smear.
- c. Colon Cancer: Screening for colon cancer starts at 45 years of age or earlier if you have risk factors.

Reflective Question Answers

1. Why is cancer screening important?
 - a. It is important to work with your healthcare provider to screen for cancers for which you might be at risk. This makes it more likely that you would catch cancer early if you had it and decreases your risk of dying from cancer.

2. What are some risk factors for cancer in general?
 - a. Some risk factors for cancer are things we can change –our habits, diet, and lifestyle. Ways that you can reduce your risk of cancer include eating fruits and vegetables every day, avoiding fatty foods, and getting 30 minutes of exercise per day.
 - b. Use of tobacco and alcohol both increase the risk for many kinds of cancer, so avoiding alcohol and tobacco use will lower your risk for cancer.
 - c. Cancers can sometimes run in families, so if your blood relatives have cancer, that also increases your risk for developing cancer. These risk factors are important to mention to your provider to guide cancer screening.

3. When should you talk to your doctor?
 - a. Always talk to your doctor about cancer screening if you have any family history of cancer or if a doctor has ever told you that you had an abnormal cancer screening in the past.
 - b. If any of the risk factors in this presentation sound like they might apply to you, or if you aren't sure if they do, talk to your doctor about your risk factors to find out which cancer screenings would be most helpful to you.
 - c. You should also talk to your doctor if you have changes in your body, accidental weight loss, or are feeling poorly for more than a few days

4. What can you do in between screenings to reduce your risk of developing cancer?
 - a. Eat a healthy diet that includes a lot of fruits and vegetables and avoids fats
 - b. Exercise as much as you are able
 - c. Avoid or reduce alcohol and tobacco use
 - d. Get a Gardasil 9 vaccine
 - e. Use barrier protection when having sex
 - f. Wear sunscreen

5. What are some cancers that you are recommended to start screening for at certain ages?
 - a. Mammography – before 50, often 40
 - b. PAP Smear – 21
 - c. Colon cancer screening – 45

- d. Talk to your doctor about recommendations:
 - i. Prostate
 - ii. Lung
 - iii. Skin
 - iv. Oral/throat
 - v. Liver
 - vi. Pancreatic