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PROMOTING HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

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Wellness Wednesdays

APRIL, 2025 WEEK 1

# STAY AHEAD WITH EARLY CANCER DETECTION: Why Early Detection Saves Lives

Cancer is one of the leading causes of death worldwide, but with increased awareness, routine screenings, and early detection, survival rates continue to improve. Many cancers are treatable when caught early, making regular check-ups and knowing potential warning signs essential.

April is National Cancer Control Month. It is important to educate yourself and your loved ones about the importance of screenings and how to support those affected by cancer.

## KNOW THE SIGNS: COMMON CANCER SYMPTOMS

While some cancers may not cause symptoms in early stages, certain warning signs could indicate a need for further evaluation:

**Unexplained weight loss:**
Losing weight without changes in diet or activity level.

**Persistent fatigue:**
Extreme tiredness that doesn't improve with rest.

**Unusual lumps or swelling:**
Particularly in the breast, testicles, or lymph nodes.

**Changes in skin or moles:**
Growths that change in size, shape, or color.

**Chronic cough or hoarseness:**
A persistent cough that lasts for weeks and isn't linked to common causes like asthma or allergies.

**Unusual bleeding:**
Blood in urine, stool, or prolonged menstrual bleeding.

If you notice any of these symptoms, schedule an appointment with your physician immediately. Early intervention is critical for positive outcomes. Never ignore your symptoms, even if you think they're minor.

**FOLLOW THE MOUSE:**
We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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**Early detection is vital to improving your chances of survival, and screenings play a critical role in discovering cancers before symptoms appear.**

## ROUTINE SCREENINGS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Screenings help detect cancer before symptoms appear, improving treatment success rates. For example, 57% of people with lung cancer survive their disease for 5 years or more when diagnosed at stage I compared with only 3% of those diagnosed at stage IV. Here's a guide to recommended screenings based on age and risk factors:

| | CANCER TYPE | RECOMMENDED SCREENING | WHO SHOULD GET IT? |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Breast Cancer | Mammogram | Women 40+ annually (earlier if high risk) |
| | Cervical Cancer | Pap Smear & HPV Test | Women 21-65 every 3-5 years |
| | Colorectal Cancer | Colonoscopy | Adults 45+ every 10 years |
| | Prostate Cancer | PSA Blood Test | Men 50+ (or 40+ if at high risk) |
| | Lung Cancer | Low-dose CT Scan | Adults 50-80 with a history of smoking |
| | Skin Cancer | Full-body exam | Those with fair skin, frequent sun exposure |

***Work with your primary care physician to determine the best screening schedule based on personal and family history. Read more about the importance of early screening here.***

## RALLY AROUND ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT

Taking action in the fight against cancer is an act of support for your community, whether you're going through your own cancer journey, know someone who is, or simply want to show up for others. Here's how you can make a difference:

1. **Join a local cancer support group.** Many organizations provide resources and emotional support for those diagnosed with cancer and their caregivers. Check out **BCBSIL ComPsych** for more information on how to find a group near you.
2. **Participate in local charity walks and fundraisers.** These events play a vital role in raising awareness and funding for cancer research. To find opportunities in your area, explore community bulletin boards, follow local organizations on social media, or visit hospital and nonprofit websites.
3. **Volunteer for an organization.** Contributing your time to local groups supports life-saving treatments and prevention efforts. Find a volunteer opportunity near you **here**.
4. **Wear awareness colors.** Each type of cancer has a dedicated awareness ribbon color. Wearing them can spark conversations and show support.

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## SPREAD THE WORD, MONTH AFTER MONTH

Throughout the year, different forms of cancer are recognized with awareness campaigns. Here's a quick reference guide:

| CANCER AWARENESS: ROCK YOUR RIBBON | | |
|---|---|---|
| **January (Teal)** Cervical Cancer Awareness | **February (Lavender)** National Cancer Prevention Month | **March (Dark Blue)** Colorectal Cancer Awareness |
| **May (Black – Melanoma) (Orange – Non-Melanoma)** Skin Cancer Awareness | **June (Lavender)** National Cancer Survivor Month | **July (Yellow Ribbon)** Sarcoma Awareness |
| **July (Yellow)** Sarcoma Awareness | **August (Amber)** Appendix Cancer Awareness | **September (Gold – Childhood) (Red – Blood) (Teal – Ovarian)** Childhood, Blood, and Ovarian Cancer Awareness |
| **October (Pink)** Breast Cancer Awareness | **November (White – Lung) (Purple – Pancreatic)** Lung and Pancreatic Cancer Awareness | **December (Lavender)** Cancer Prevention & Screening Awareness |

***Mark your calendar and take a moment to learn more about these cancers when their awareness month comes around.***

## DON'T LEAVE IT UP TO CHANCE

Cancer prevention starts with education, awareness, and action. Scheduling routine screenings, recognizing early warning signs, and participating in advocacy efforts all play a vital role in combatting cancer.

Take a step toward prevention today—whether it's scheduling an appointment, checking in on a loved one, or joining a local fundraiser. Small efforts can make a big impact in the fight against cancer.

Consult with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) to discuss any concerns you have and develop a screening schedule that's best for you. If you don't have a PCP, you can call the Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card or **log on to Blue Access for Members℠ (BAM℠) bcbsil.com** and use the **Provider Finder**. This fast, easy-to-use tool improves members' experience when searching for in-network health care providers.

**Found this week's edition of Wellness Wednesdays to be helpful? Spread the word to your colleagues so they too can make cancer awareness and prevention a priority in 2025.**

**SOURCES:** ***American Cancer Society, David Crosby, et. al., WHO***