Cancer research has brought remarkable advances against cancer in the areas of treatment, detection and diagnosis, prevention, technology, genetic discoveries, and much more. Specially trained professional staff can respond to calls in English or Spanish and on TTY equipment.

For additional information on cancer in general contact:

National Cancer Institute
Cancer Information Service at
1-800-4-CANCER (1.800.422.6237)
TTY 1.866.228.4327
www.cancer.org

The Environmental Epidemiology Section provides leadership, investigative support, and resources in an effort to assess and resolve human health threats to chemical exposure.

For additional information on chemical exposures and health contact:

Environmental Epidemiology
Indiana State Department of Health
317.351.7190, ext. 262

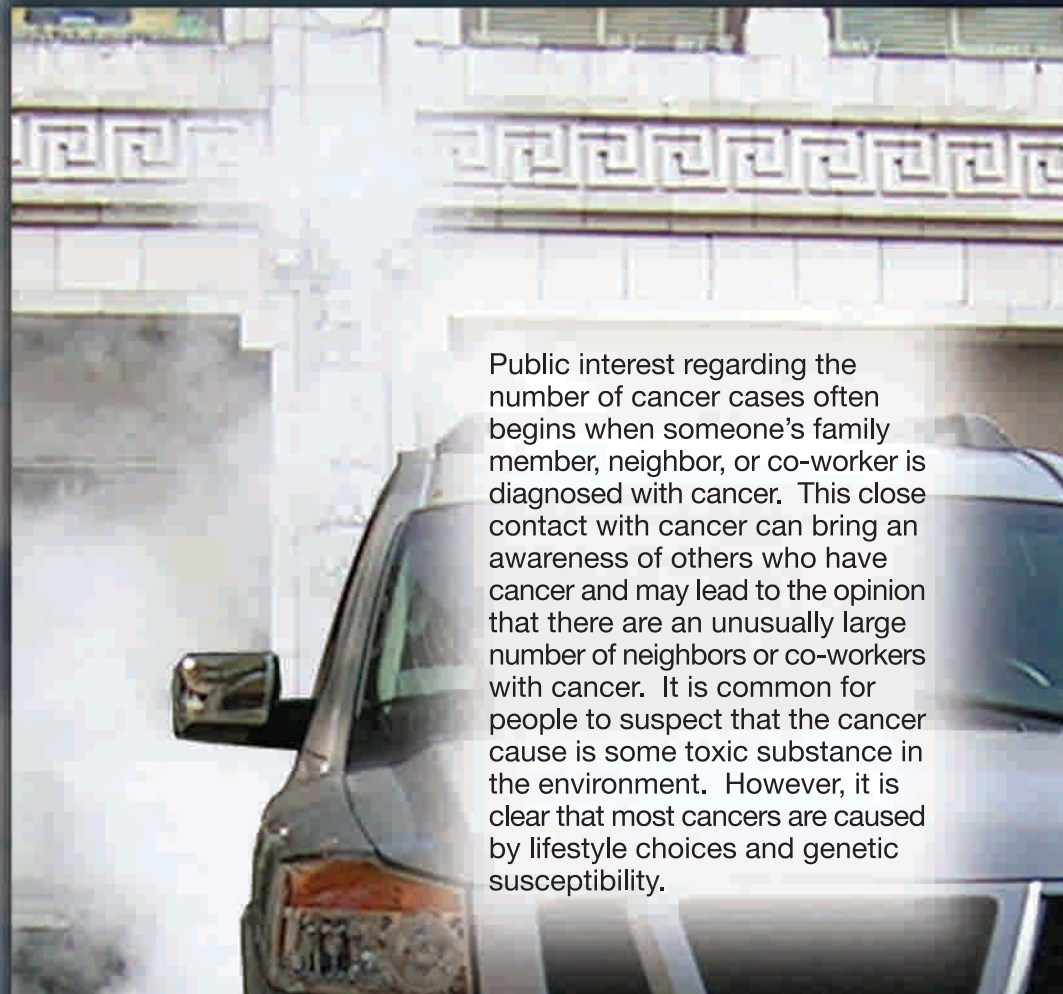
To report your specific cancer concerns contact:

Epidemiology Resource Center
Indiana State Department of Health
317.233.7272
www.in.gov/isdh/files/cancer_bro_04.pdf

This fact sheet was supported in whole by funds from the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act trust fund through a cooperative agreement with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, Public Health Service, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

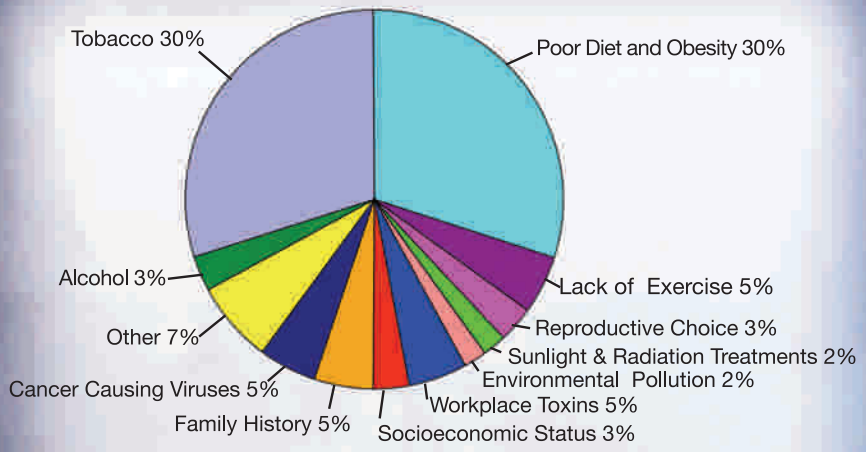
Indiana State Department of Health

Cancer and Environment



Public interest regarding the number of cancer cases often begins when someone's family member, neighbor, or co-worker is diagnosed with cancer. This close contact with cancer can bring an awareness of others who have cancer and may lead to the opinion that there are an unusually large number of neighbors or co-workers with cancer. It is common for people to suspect that the cancer cause is some toxic substance in the environment. However, it is clear that most cancers are caused by lifestyle choices and genetic susceptibility.

Cancer Causes



Source: Harvard Report on Cancer Prevention Vol 1: Causes of Human Cancer, Cancer Causes and Control, a journal of cancer studies.

Cancer Facts

- Cancers as a group are very common. One of every three American women and one of every two men will eventually have some type of cancer.
- Most cancers are preventable.
- Cancer is not usually caused by one factor alone. It is usually the result of a combination of factors, including lifestyle, heredity, and environment, which interact in ways that are not yet fully understood.
- Different types of cancers have differing rates of occurrence, causes, and chances for survival. Therefore, we cannot assume that all the different types of cancers in a community or workplace share a common cause.
- Most types of cancers occur among people over 45 yearsof age.
- When a community, neighborhood, or workplace consists primarily of people over the age of 45, particularly over the age of 60, we would expect more cancers than in a neighborhood or workplace of diverse ages
- Although serious diseases of children including cancer are rare, it should be noted that, of those deaths that do occur in childhood (age 1-14), cancer is the second leading cause.
- Environmental exposure to certain chemicals or other agents in the workplace, community, or home can increase the risk of cancer.

Cancer and the Environment

It is common for people to suspect that cancer is caused by an environmental exposure. In most cases, when several people within the same geographic area or workplace have cancer, it is the result of chance without a direct link to a specific cause.

- Most environmental health scientists currently believe that less than 10 percent of cancers are caused by toxic environmental exposures, with the exception of environmental tobacco smoke.
- Cancer usually develops over many years, making it hard to pinpoint what caused the cancer. Researchers have a lifetime of habits and exposures to rule out to find a direct link, if it exists.
- For any chemical to cause cancer, it must enter the body through breathing the air, drinking water, eating food, or skin contact.
- A large number of cases of one type of cancer, as few as one or two cases of a rare type of cancer, or a number of cases of a more common type of cancer in a younger than expected age group suggests a possible environmental cause.
- Even when information is collected and studied carefully, scientists are, more often than not, unable to adequately establish that an environmental exposure caused the cancer(s) being studied.

The first state cancer registry was organized in 1932. The Indiana State Cancer Registry began with cases diagnosed in 1987. Many public health scientists and citizens hoped that their shared experiences from what they have seen in groups of people with cancer in the community might lead to the discovery of specific cancer causes. Thousands of studies have taken place throughout the country, conducted mainly by local, state, and federal agencies. We have learned much from occupational studies, but no environmental investigation has led to the identification of any causes, even when a statistically higher number of cancers in a geographic area could be documented.