**What is cancer? The facts**

Although we use just the one word, cancer is actually many different illnesses. Cancer can occur in any part of the body. There are over 200 different types of cancer.

How does cancer develop?

Every part of our body is made up of tiny building blocks called cells. Cancer is an illness of these cells. The cells in our body divide to help us grow or to replace damaged cells. Normally they divide in a controlled way, but this process can go wrong producing cancer cells that divide in an uncontrolled way. These cancer cells can then crowd out healthy cells and may spread to other parts of the body.

Tests for cancer

There are lots of different tests that are used to find out if someone has cancer. These include blood tests, scans or even having an operation to remove part of a lump to see if it is cancerous (a procedure called a biopsy).

What are the treatments?

Depending on the type of cancer and what stage it is at when diagnosed, treatments can be very successful. There are three commonly used treatments:

1. **Surgery** is sometimes necessary. Surgeons may need to operate to remove a tumour. Surgery is often accompanied by other treatments such as radiotherapy and/or chemotherapy.

2. **Radiotherapy** involves exposing cancers to a type of radiation over a short period of time. The area affected by cancer is exposed to radioactive rays in much the same way that an ordinary X-ray is used to view a broken limb. Radiotherapy can kill cancer cells and reduce the size of tumours.

3. **Chemotherapy** involves taking powerful drugs that can be swallowed or given directly into a vein. The drugs are sometimes given in one go or slowly over a longer period of time.

Radiotherapy and chemotherapy are designed to damage any cells (including cancer cells) that are rapidly dividing. Unfortunately, it means they can also destroy good cells. This is what causes side effects such as sickness, tiredness or hair loss. But side effects always wear off after the treatment is finished, and any hair lost will nearly always grow back.
FACT OR FICTION?

There are a lot of myths surrounding cancer that are simply not true. Do you know the facts? Sort or label the following statements as true or false.

A The earlier someone gets treated for their cancer, the better.

B Cancer is contagious.

C Cancer is much more common among older people.

D There are 12 different types of cancer.

E Cancer makes your hair fall out.

F Cancer cannot be treated. It’s incurable.

G A benign tumour isn’t cancer. A malignant tumour is cancer.

H The number of people living with cancer in the UK is increasing.

I It’s best not to talk about cancer. It’s uncomfortable and depressing.
## FACT OR FICTION? THE ANSWERS

| A | The earlier someone gets treated for their cancer, the better. **TRUE**  
If a cancer is diagnosed and treated at an early stage when the cancer has not spread far, the chances of the person surviving it are a lot higher. |
| --- | --- |
| B | Cancer is contagious. **FALSE**  
Cancer is not contagious which means you can’t catch it from someone else. |
| C | Cancer is much more common among older people. **TRUE**  
Cancer can affect anyone, but it mainly affects older people. Nearly two thirds (64%) of people who get cancer are over the age of 65. |
| D | There are 12 different types of cancer. **FALSE**  
There are more than 200 types of cancer. Cancer can occur in any part of the body. |
| E | Cancer makes your hair fall out. **FALSE**  
Cancer does not cause hair loss. But some cancer treatments such as radiotherapy and chemotherapy can cause side effects including hair loss. Any hair lost during the treatment will almost always grow back, sometimes a different texture or colour. |
| F | Cancer cannot be treated. It’s incurable. **FALSE**  
Treatments for cancer are often very successful. Many people recover completely and go on to live normal lives. |
| G | A benign tumour is non-cancerous. A malignant tumour is cancerous. **TRUE**  
A benign tumour isn’t cancer and can often be removed easily through surgery. Cancer is the name given to a malignant tumour. |
| H | The number of people living with cancer in the UK is increasing. **TRUE**  
With treatments improving and the population ageing, more people are living with the illness than ever before – two million and counting. |
| I | It’s best not to talk about cancer. It’s uncomfortable and depressing. **DEBATEABLE**  
Certainly some people find it hard to talk about a serious illness like cancer. On the other hand, cancer is a part of everyday life. And the more we talk about it, the more we understand. Sometimes not talking about something can make it seem scarier and lead to confusion. What do you think? |
GET THE MESSAGE OUT THERE

Planning your health campaign

**STEP 1** Call to action
(What do you want your audience to do as a result of seeing your campaign?)

**STEP 2** Target audience
(Age, gender, lifestyle.)

**STEP 3** Key message
(What key facts or info do you want your audience to remember?)

**STEP 4** Campaign slogan
(A slogan should be catchy, easy to understand and memorable.)

**STEP 5** What media channels would your campaign use?
(eg TV, press, outdoor advertising, online, social media, cinema, SMS, leaflets, radio, events)

**STEP 6** Which celebs would you ask to front your campaign?
SUPPORTING EACH OTHER

Read the following biogs. Then think about how each character might be feeling and why.

John works as a supervisor in a car factory and enjoys going to the football at the weekends. He has recently been diagnosed with colon cancer. He’s had surgery to remove the cancer and has now started a course of chemotherapy. Chemo makes him feel very tired and sick but it helps make sure the cancer doesn’t come back. John hopes to return to work gradually when he’s feeling better.

Rachel is married to John. She works part time in a local supermarket and looks after her daughter Emily on her days off. Rachel had to take time off work to help look after John while he was recovering from surgery. Now that he’s going through chemo she’s helping to care for him on her days off, as well as looking after Emily. Things are pretty stressful with all this going on.

Alex is 15. He likes playing football, computer games and hanging out with his friends. He hasn’t been able to go to football for a few weeks as his mum’s too busy to give him a lift. Alex is upset about his dad’s illness but doesn’t want to talk to his parents about it as they’ve got enough to worry about.

Jamil is one of Alex’s best friends. They sit together in most classes at school and play for the same football team on Saturdays. Jamil knows Alex’s dad is being treated for cancer but he hasn’t spoken to his friend about it yet. He doesn’t know what to say or do to help his friend and doesn’t want to upset him by getting it wrong.
How are you feeling?

When someone is affected by cancer they may experience a range of different emotions. First read about Alex, his family and friend. Then choose the feelings from the list below you think each person is experiencing.
There are a lot of things to think about when organising a successful fundraiser. But it’s a fun and rewarding experience that can make a big difference. Use the questions below to help plan an activity or event that people will remember.

What are the main aims of your event?

What are you going to do? How will you raise money?

Where and when will it be held?
How will you tell people about your event or activity?

How will you make sure people are kept healthy and safe at your event?

What jobs need to be done before the day?