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Cancer affects 1 in 4 people in South Africa!

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Every year 14 million people are diagnosed with cancer and in South Africa; cancer affects one in four people!



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According to The Cancer Association of South Africa (CANSA), one in four people in South Africa have or will be affected by cancer.

Let's take a look at three common forms of cancer and find out how to detect the disease at an early stage or prevent it altogether…

Cervical cancer

"According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), cervical cancer is the second most prevalent cancer affecting women after breast cancer. With the increase of the number of

cervical cancer cases, women need to learn to talk about any symptoms that may occur and encourage each other to get screened for this deadly disease," says Dr Trudy Smith, Gynaecological Oncologist at The Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre.

She says there is a stigma around cervical cancer as it is often caused by the sexually transmitted disease known as the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV).

"There is a misconception that there is nothing you can do about cancer. This is not the case. When it comes to cervical cancer for example, there are several HPV vaccines available to prevent contracting the virus – the major cause of cervical cancer," says Dr Smith,

She adds that work is being done on the development of treatment vaccines and of course the vaccines that prevent cancer are coming into fruition.

Breast cancer

"The average woman over the age of 35 has a 13 – 15% chance of developing breast cancer within their lifetime. In other words 13 - 15 out of every 100 women will develop breast cancer," says Dr Owen Nosworthy, Specialist Physician and Medical Oncologist at the Wits Donald Gordon Medical Centre.

"Early detection is key to preventing the cancer moving to an incurable stage. Regular self-examination and knowing your family history is a positive step towards decreasing your chance of contracting the disease," explains Nosworthy.

Prostate cancer

Prostate cancer is the highest cancer causing death in men. Men are 35% more likely to be diagnosed with prostate cancer than women are to be diagnosed with breast cancer.

As prostate cancer is one of the most asymptomatic cancers, it is important to get screened as most men will not even experience any symptoms.

Treating cancer

Cancer treatments are evolving continuously and there are enormous advances being made in the treatment of cancer using all modalities. Surgical techniques are improving, radiation therapies are becoming more advanced and chemotherapies as well as the newer biological therapies are advancing incredibly.

"It is important to remember that most forms of cancer can be treated extremely successfully if found early. Be sure to seek guidance from your healthcare practitioner or local clinic with regards to the screening programmes available. Be aware of the causes of cancer and how you can modify your personal risk such as stopping smoking, exercise and following a balanced diet," concludes Nosworthy.

Recommended reading: *Cancer 101: What you need to know (video)*