Cancer is very common in California and the United States as a whole, and in most other developed countries. In California, approximately 133,000 people are diagnosed every year with some form of invasive cancer, not including the common skin cancers. About 53,000 Californians die each year from cancer. Based on current statistics, more than 2 out of 5 Californians will develop cancer at some time in their lives, and about 1 in 310 children will be diagnosed with cancer before age 20. Many cancers are now curable and cancer treatment continues to improve. Nonetheless, nearly 1 out of every 5 Californians is likely to die from cancer.

What Causes Cancer?
Cancer is a disease that occurs when the normal growth control of body cells is impaired. This allows cells to grow out of control and spread, forming tumors. The causes of cancer are varied and often multifactorial, meaning that multiple factors can interact to increase the risk of cancer development. Some risk factors, such as heredity or age, are not preventable, while others, such as lifestyle choices or exposure to certain substances, can be modified to reduce cancer risk.

How Common is Cancer?
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What Does the State do to Monitor Cancer?
The CCR, which is run by the California Department of Health Services in collaboration with the Public Health Institute and ten regional cancer registries, is an essential tool for the prevention and control of cancer in California. By law, all new cancer cases diagnosed in California since January of 1988 have been reported to the CCR, with strict guidelines to maintain patient confidentiality.

The CCR uses the information for research into cancer causes and prevention, and for active collaboration with other health researchers seeking to lessen the impact of cancer on the citizens of California. In addition, it publishes reports each year summarizing statewide cancer case rates and deaths, changes in rates over time, and differences according to age, race/ethnicity and types of cancer. Special reports address specific concerns, such as a report on breast cancer. The CCR responds to questions from cancer patients, the community, public health officials, researchers, legislators, and others with cancer-related concerns. All reports are available free of charge upon request.
regardless of their ethnic origin.

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differences among people 65 and older, from anything unusual about the cancers among residents of the neighborhood.  For example, in a community of about 1,000 persons of Asian or Hispanic origin, one can expect that the number of new cancer cases can be expected to occur in the neighborhood, or whether they seem unusual.

Who Gets Cancer?

Unfortunately, almost all people can develop cancer, even children and young adults who lead active, healthy lives. However, nearly 60 percent of the cancers diagnosed in California are among people 65 and older who make up only about 10 percent of the population. Surprisingly, there are large differences among people of different ethnic origin. African-American men have the highest cancer risk, and non-Hispanic white people have substantially higher cancer rates than persons of Hispanic or Asian origin. Children have few differences in their cancer rates regardless of their ethnic origin.

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