

Sarcoma Awareness



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Sarcoma Awareness

Sarcoma is a type of cancer that can occur in various locations in your body.

Sarcoma is the general term for a broad group of cancers that begin in the bones and in the soft (also called connective) tissues (soft tissue sarcoma). Soft tissue sarcoma forms in the tissues that connect, support, and surround other body structures. This includes muscle, fat, blood vessels, nerves, tendons, and the lining of your joints.

There are more than 70 types of sarcoma. Treatment for sarcoma varies depending on sarcoma type, location, and other factors. For different types of Sarcoma please [click here](#).

Symptoms

Signs and symptoms of sarcoma include:

- A lump that can be felt through the skin that may or may not be painful
- Bone pain
- A broken bone that happens unexpectedly, such as with a minor injury or no injury at all
- Abdominal pain
- Weight loss

Causes

It's not clear what causes most sarcomas.

In general, cancer forms when changes (mutations) happen in the DNA within cells. The DNA inside a cell is packaged into a large number of individual genes, each of which contains a set of instructions telling the cell what functions to perform, as well as how to grow and divide.

Mutations might tell cells to grow and divide uncontrollably and to continue living when normal cells would die. If this happens, the accumulating abnormal cells can form a tumour. Cells can break away and spread (metastasize) to other parts of the body.

Sarcoma Awareness continued...

Risk factors

Factors that can increase the risk of sarcoma include:

- **Inherited syndromes.** Some syndromes that increase the risk of cancer can be passed from parents to children. Examples of syndromes that increase the risk of sarcoma include familial retinoblastoma and neurofibromatosis type 1.
- **Radiation therapy for cancer.** Radiation treatment for cancer increases the risk of developing a sarcoma later.
- **Chronic swelling (lymphedema).** Lymphedema is swelling caused by a backup of lymph fluid that occurs when the

lymphatic system is blocked or damaged. It increases the risk of a type of sarcoma called angiosarcoma.

- **Exposure to chemicals.** Certain chemicals, such as some industrial chemicals and herbicides, can increase the risk of sarcoma that affects the liver.
- **Exposure to viruses.** The virus called human herpesvirus 8 can increase the risk of a type of sarcoma called Kaposi's sarcoma in people with weakened immune systems.

Source: Sarcoma - Symptoms and causes - Mayo Clinic Accessed 7 May 2024

UV Safety Awareness

Sun Safety Tips: Summertime is when all South Africans take advantage of our climate, visiting beaches, attending outdoor events, swimming, fishing, and having fun with family and friends outdoors.

South Africa has very high UV levels in Summer. Constant exposure to the damaging effects of high UV levels can result in:

1. Sunburn,
2. Skin damage,
3. And skin cancer.

All South Africans who spend time in the sun without proper protection can get skin cancer.

7 Sun safety tips for the South African summer

1.) Understand how the sun protection factor (SPF) works in your sunscreen.

A higher SPF does not necessarily relate to better sun protection. After a factor of 30, the sun protection does not get better, it just allows you more time in the sun. So how do you know how much time you can spend in the sun based on the SPF in your sunscreen?

Divide the SPF by 15 and that will give you a rough estimate of how many hours you have before you need to re-apply your sunscreen. Do not forget that swimming and towelling down after a swim can remove your sunscreen.

2.) Know your Risk.

You are at higher risk of skin cancer if the following applies:

- You have a family history of melanoma?
- Have more than 50 moles on your skin?
- Moles that are irregularly shaped?
- Very fair complexion with blonde or red hair?
- Are you on immune suppressant medication?

If you feel that you are at risk, see a GP or a dermatologist.

3.) Do not stress about your Vitamin D production.

You do not need to expose your skin to the sun to get the benefits of Vitamin D. Five to 15 minutes of direct exposure on our hands, arms, and face 2-3 times a week is all you need.



4.) Time your time in the sun.

Try to stay out of the sun between 10am and 3.00pm.

5.) Make Sunglasses your favourite accessory.

The sun can have a very damaging effect on our eyes, particularly after prolonged or direct exposure. Makes sure that your sunglasses fit properly and try to buy sunglasses that offer some form of UV protection. Ensure that you always wear them outdoors and remember that sunglasses are to eyes what sunscreen is to the skin.

6.) Protect your children from the damaging rays of the sun.

Try to keep them out of the sun from 10am to 3.00pm. Ensure that they are wearing protective sunsuits, or a simple T-shirt in a darker colour. They must wear a hat when in the sun. Keep on applying their sunscreen when they are in the sun. They can burn on cloudy days, and this is often when the most skin damage occurs. Babies should never be exposed to direct sunlight.

7.) Keep hydrated.

Drink water throughout the day if you are planning to be outdoors all day. It is easy to become dehydrated with symptoms such as dizziness, weaknesses, fainting and confusion.

Source: 7 Sun Safety Tips For The South African Summer (medicalaidcomparisons.co.za) Accessed 6 May 2024

Corporate Wellness

Well-being is the ability of individuals to address normal stresses, work productively, and realize one's highest potential. Research shows that employees in good health are more likely to deliver optimal performance in the workplace. Healthy employees not only have better quality of life, they also benefit from having a lower risk of disease, illness, and injury, as well as increased work productivity and a greater likelihood of contributing to their communities.

Beyond helping workers uphold work-life balance and improve overall health, organizations are exploring additional wellness benefits such as recognition, leadership training, and community volunteer projects that improve both well-being and overall engagement.

Employee Engagement in Workplace Wellness

Wellness program engagement is about more than just showing up at a health screening or other activity to receive an incentive or avoid a financial penalty. Although participation is necessary to be engaged, employees do have to be engaged to participate. Engagement involves creating and maintaining a sincere interest and involvement in living a healthy life—at home and at work. Workplace wellness programs are only as effective as the proportion of employees who are truly engaged in the program.

Although industry leaders and researchers vary in their definition of wellness program engagement, engagement is commonly viewed as the level of enrollment and sustained participation in a program. This includes:

- Wellness events (e.g., walking, nutrition, resilience programs).
- Services (e.g., screening, health coaching).
- Resources (e.g., online assessments, learning modules, training programs).

Active participation in these offerings results in employees making healthy decisions (e.g., choosing healthy foods, quitting tobacco, exercising regularly, managing stress). Engagement also includes employee input and involvement in the design and execution of the wellness program.

Achieving Wellness Program Engagement

According to the Gallup Organization, “Companies are most successful at creating a culture of well-being when they provide managers with the right tools for a holistic, multifaceted approach.

Organizations can develop a comprehensive culture of health and well-being for their employees. They can not only address individuals' health risk factors, but also organizational factors such as:

- Relationship to the work environment.
- Training and leadership.
- Corporate values.

They can tailor program offerings to create value for participants and the organization. Surveys on needs and interests, interviews, and focus groups are good ways to understand what is important to employees. Employers also can learn what kind of rewards, from water bottles to gift cards, might be good incentives for employees to attend an event or take a survey. They also can gain insight into what might motivate employees to make changes for a healthier lifestyle.

Communication is key to successful employee engagement. Organizations can benefit from focus groups that provide information on the best methods and frequency of communication and marketing.

Increasing program engagement requires different strategies to involve employees. Consider the following examples of ways to help employees participate and sustain involvement in workplace wellness while improving overall health.



Ways to Engage Employees in Elements of a Comprehensive Worksite Wellness Program

Step 1: Design & Analyze

Seek and support employees' input and participation in:

- Creating a wellness committee.
- Developing an employee needs and interest survey.
- Using interviews and focus groups.
- Completing an employee needs and interests survey.
- Securing leadership support.
- Developing a strategic communications plan.
- Reviewing and designing a benefits plan.
- Completing a work site health evaluation.
- Conducting an organizational policy review.
- Prioritizing staffing, program materials, data system, recognition, and incentives to develop the budget.
- Identifying community partners in health.
- Identifying measures for program evaluation.

Step 2: Implement

Work with employees to:

- Create a program accessible to employees and family members—on-site, online, and by phone.
- Provide programs that are low cost and affordable to the workers.
- Communicate the program offerings through numerous channels (e.g., e-mail, posters, website, newsletters, postcards).
- Create a healthy environment (e.g., tobacco-free workplace and healthy meeting and vending policies, walking trails, on-site physical activity options).
- Offer team and individual programming (e.g., challenges, education sessions).
- Connect with a health coach, team leader, or others.
- Demonstrate leadership support and encouragement in wellness opportunities.

Step 3: Evaluate Success

Work with and support managers and senior leaders to:

- Communicate the benefits of the program and success stories.
- Provide recognition to individuals and specific units, departments, and locations.
- Survey participants to capture feedback on programs, including satisfaction and suggestions.
- Generate participation reports specific to unit, departments, or location.
- Complete impact measures and reporting to include changes in health behaviour and clinical parameters.
- Complete cost benefits analysis (requires 2 to 3 years of data).

Source: Engaging Employees in Their Health and Wellness (cdc.gov) Accessed 7 May 2024



World Hepatitis Day

Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver that is caused by a variety of infectious viruses and non-infectious agents leading to a range of health problems, some of which can be fatal. There are five main strains of the hepatitis virus, referred to as types A, B, C, D and E. While they all cause liver disease, they differ in important ways including modes of transmission, severity of the illness, geographical distribution, and prevention methods. In particular, types B and C lead to chronic disease in hundreds of millions of people and together are the most common cause of liver cirrhosis, liver cancer and viral hepatitis-related deaths. An estimated 354 million people worldwide live with hepatitis B or C, and for most, testing and treatment remain beyond reach.

Some types of hepatitis are preventable through vaccination. A WHO study found that an estimated 4.5 million premature deaths could be prevented in low- and middle-income countries by 2030 through vaccination, diagnostic tests, medicines, and education campaigns. WHO's global hepatitis strategy, endorsed by all WHO Member States, aims to reduce new hepatitis infections by 90% and deaths by 65% between 2016 and 2030.

Symptoms

Many people with hepatitis A, B, C, D or E exhibit only mild symptoms or no symptoms at all. Each form of the virus, however, can cause more severe symptoms. Symptoms of hepatitis A, B and C may include fever, malaise, loss of appetite, diarrhoea, nausea, abdominal discomfort, dark-coloured urine, and jaundice (a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes). In some cases, the virus can also cause a chronic liver infection that can later develop into cirrhosis (a scarring of the liver) or liver cancer. These patients are at risk of death.

Hepatitis D (HDV) is only found in people already infected with hepatitis B (HBV); however, the dual infection of HBV and HDV can cause a more serious infection and poorer health outcomes, including accelerated progression to cirrhosis. Development of chronic hepatitis D is rare.

Hepatitis E (HEV) begins with mild fever, reduced appetite, nausea and vomiting lasting for a few days. Some persons may also have abdominal pain, itching (without skin lesions), skin rash or joint pain. They may also exhibit jaundice, with dark urine and pale stools, and a slightly enlarged, tender liver (hepatomegaly), or occasionally acute liver failure.

Treatment

Safe and effective vaccines are available to prevent hepatitis B virus (HBV). This vaccine also prevents the development of hepatitis D virus (HDV) and given at birth strongly reduces transmission risk from mother to child. Chronic hepatitis B infection can be treated with antiviral agents. Treatment can slow the progression of cirrhosis, reduce incidence of liver cancer and improve long term survival. Only a proportion of people with chronic hepatitis B infection will require treatment. A vaccine also exists to prevent infections of hepatitis E (HEV), although it is not currently widely available. There are no specific treatments for HBV and HEV and hospitalization is not usually required. It is advised to avoid unnecessary medications due to the negative effect on liver function caused by these infections.

Hepatitis C (HCV) can cause both acute and chronic infection. Some people recover on their own, while others develop a life-threatening infection or further complications, including cirrhosis or cancer. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C. Antiviral medicines can cure more than 95% of persons with hepatitis C infection, thereby reducing the risk of death from cirrhosis and liver cancer, but access to diagnosis and treatment remains low.

Hepatitis A virus (HAV) is most common in low- and middle-income countries due to reduced access to clean and reliable water sources and the increased risk of contaminated food. A safe and effective vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis A. Most HAV infections are mild, with the majority of people recovering fully and developing immunity to further infection. However, these infections can also rarely be severe and life threatening due to the risk of liver failure.

Source: Hepatitis (who.int) Accessed 7 May 2024

Aon Employee Benefits Consulting

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