

Message from the Minister of Health Hon Dr Frank Anthony
World Cancer Day
February 04, 2021



Minister of Health Hon Dr Frank Anthony

Once again, Guyana joins with the rest of the world to mark World Cancer Day. World Cancer Day is geared at raising awareness and education on cancers, and pressing individuals across the world to take action against the disease. This year marks the 21st anniversary of its commemoration which has grown into a positive and progressive movement against one of the world's greatest health care challenges.

In Guyana, cancer remains one of the most common causes of premature death and a significant challenge in our health care system affecting men, women and children. Breast, Cervical, Prostate and Colorectal Cancers

continue to be the most frequent types of cancer detected. Sadly this illness remains a taboo topic among Guyanese, with many persons having a sense of fear, shamed and hopelessness at the mere mention of the word CANCER, yet alone a diagnosis.

This year marks the final year of the World Cancer Day global theme "*I Am and I will*" which speaks to our individual and personal commitments to ACT against cancer by informing and encouraging healthy practices for prevention and early detection, treatment and palliative care. For non-medical professionals this may raise the question "What Can I Do?"

Cancer prevention starts with you, your family and the daily choices you make which can reduce your risk of developing cancers by 30-40%. These include:

- avoiding tobacco in all its forms- smoking, vaping, chewing (tobacco use is responsible for 22% of cancer deaths globally).
- eating healthy diets consisting of fresh fruits and vegetables daily.

- maintain a healthy weigh (BMI-18.5 to 24.9) with routine physical activity and exercise.
- avoiding excessive alcohol use.

You can further reduce your risk for specific cancers by subscribing to proven best practices. Be sure to discuss these best practices listed below with your community doctor:

- Vaccinating young girls and boys (9-16 years) against the Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). This virus has been shown to cause cancers, especially Cervical Cancer.
- Vaccination of high risk groups against Hepatitis B virus.
- Reducing exposure to chemicals (e.g. pesticides) by wear protective gear.
- Decreasing over-exposure to sunlight which may lead to skin cancer.
- Seeking routine health checks and cancer screenings at your community doctor and clinic.

The Ministry of Health (MOH) will continue to work with our international partners and local stakeholders to upgrade our health facilities and empower health care workers to ensure that all Guyanese have equitable access to the highest quality of care aimed at awareness and prevention, early diagnosis and staging, timely access to appropriate treatment and palliative care and support.

As we take the time to observe World Cancer Day 2021, I charge you, to make a personal pledge towards the fight against cancer, whether it be helping to raise awareness, volunteering with Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Cancer Groups or lending support to those diagnosed and their family. Every voice and helpful act counts.

I encourage those who have survived their battles with cancer and those who have lost loved ones to be bold, courageous and to share their stories that may inspire us to take a closer look at ourselves.

Cancer is real, it is serious, it does not discriminate by age, race, sex nor social or economic status. It can affect any one of us, therefore it is important that we continue to work together for better cancer prevention and control.

END