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# CANCER FACTS

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National Cancer Institute • National Institutes of Health  
Department of Health and Human Services

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## Cancer Information Sources

### Key Points

- The National Cancer Institute's Web site, at <http://www.cancer.gov>, provides access to information about cancer (see the National Cancer Institute section).
- Books and articles about cancer can be found in public, university, hospital, and medical school libraries (see the Public, University, and Medical Libraries section).
- The National Library of Medicine is the world's largest medical library. It is open to the public, and its databases can be accessed on the Internet (see The National Library of Medicine section).
- Cancer information is also available through the National Network of Libraries of Medicine and on the Healthfinder Web site (see the National Network of Libraries of Medicine and Healthfinder sections).

Information about cancer is available in libraries, on the Internet, and from many Government and private sector organizations. Most libraries have resources to help people locate cancer-related articles in the medical and scientific literature, as well as cancer information written specifically for patients and the public. Many libraries also offer public access to computer databases, allowing users to obtain information electronically. Information may also be accessed through the Internet using a computer.

The Internet is a worldwide system of computer networks containing information on a wide variety of subjects, including cancer. Internet users can find information through the World

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Wide Web (WWW) and electronic mail (e-mail). The WWW allows access to information that may include text and graphics or text only. E-mail can be used to order documents and communicate with people who can answer questions and offer technical support.

### *National Cancer Institute*

The National Cancer Institute's (NCI) Web site, at <http://www.cancer.gov>, is a one-stop resource for cancer information. This Web site provides immediate access to critical information and resources about cancer, helping people with cancer become better informed about their disease and play a more active role in their treatment and care. The site's information is logically arranged by topic, and a search function allows convenient text-word searching across all NCI Web pages. Search results often include "Best Bets" at the top of the search results pages. Best Bets are editorially selected Web pages that are judged to be most pertinent to the search term(s) used. NCI's Web site is a comprehensive resource that enables users to quickly find accurate and up-to-date information about all types of cancer, clinical trials (research studies with people), research programs, funding opportunities, cancer statistics, and the Institute itself.

Many of the NCI's cancer information resources are accessible through the cancer topics section of the Institute's Web site at <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics> on the Internet. This section contains information from PDQ®, NCI's cancer information database, including information about ongoing clinical trials. Over 160 PDQ information summaries about cancer treatment, screening, prevention, supportive care, genetics, and complementary and alternative medicine are available. Written by experts and updated regularly, these summaries are based on current standards of care and the latest research. Most of the cancer information summaries are available in both a technical version for health professionals and a nontechnical version for

patients, their families, and the general public. Many are also available in Spanish. In addition, the cancer topics section offers links to fact sheets on a range of topics.

NCI's Web site also provides comprehensive information about clinical trials at **<http://www.cancer.gov/clinicaltrials>** on the Internet. Information is available about recent advances in cancer research, what clinical trials are and how they work, and points to consider when deciding whether to participate in a clinical trial. A simple-to-use search tool is available for those interested in finding trials for a specific type of cancer, in a certain geographic region, or for a particular type of treatment.

Up-to-date, accurate cancer information is also available to patients and their families, the public, and health professionals through the NCI's Cancer Information Service (CIS). The CIS, a national information and education network, also serves as a resource for education and outreach to minority audiences and people with limited access to health care information or services. The CIS responds to calls in English and Spanish. The toll-free telephone number for the CIS is 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237). Deaf and hard of hearing callers with TTY equipment may call 1-800-332-8615. Hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time. The CIS Web site provides background information on the CIS and links to NCI resources and other cancer-related Government Web sites. It also has a Frequently Asked Questions section that addresses a variety of cancer topics. The CIS Web site is located at **<http://www.cancer.gov/cis>** on the Internet.

The NCI also offers additional Web sites and services, described below, that are accessible directly or through NCI's main Web site at **<http://www.cancer.gov>** on the Internet.

- The NCI's Publications Locator Web site can be used to order or view publications online at **<http://www.cancer.gov/publications>**. NCI materials may be identified by topic or searched by keyword, type of cancer, subject, audience, and/or language. The site includes instructions and Frequently Asked Questions. Currently, only Internet users

within the United States can use the Publications Locator to order NCI publications.

- The NCI's *LiveHelp* service, which is available through the Help link on the NCI's Web site, provides Internet users with the ability to chat online with an information specialist in English. The service is available Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Eastern time. Information specialists can help Internet users navigate NCI Web sites, search for clinical trials, and find answers to questions about cancer.

### ***The National Library of Medicine***

The National Library of Medicine (NLM) is the world's largest medical library. The NLM is open to the public, and its databases can be used to search for journal article references and abstracts (summaries of articles) without charge or registration. The NLM's databases can be accessed on the Internet and may also be available through some local university, public, and medical libraries.

MEDLINE®, the NLM's premier bibliographic database, contains over 12 million references to articles published since 1966. It is the computerized version of *Index Medicus*, with entries and references from more than 4,000 medical journals published worldwide. MEDLINE covers all aspects of the life sciences and medicine, including complementary and alternative medicine and toxicology (the biological effects of drugs and other chemicals). By searching MEDLINE, readers can find journal articles about specific topics (such as cancer) and, in many cases, can retrieve abstracts of the articles included in the databases.

The NLM allows free access to MEDLINE through PubMed®. PubMed is an easy-to-use search tool for finding journal articles of interest in the health and medical sciences. It was developed by the National Center for Biotechnology Information at the NLM. PubMed provides links to the full text of articles and other resources at the Web sites of participating publishers. User registration, a subscription fee, or other fees may be required to access the full text of articles in some journals. PubMed is also linked to molecular biology databases and to

PubMed Central, an electronic archive of life sciences journal literature. PubMed can be found at <http://pubmed.gov> on the Internet.

The NLM Gateway is another way to access information from the NLM. The NLM Gateway is designed to provide an overview of the NLM's resources, including journal articles, books, serials, audiovisuals, meeting abstracts, databases, and consumer health information. This resource allows users to search several of the NLM's databases at once. However, users may find that one resource, such as PubMed or MedlinePlus® (see below), has the information they need. They may then choose to go to that resource for a more focused search. The NLM Gateway is available at <http://gateway.nlm.nih.gov> on the Internet.

MedlinePlus is the NLM's Web site for consumer health information. This site includes links to information on more than 650 health topics, the latest health news, a medical encyclopedia, medical dictionaries, databases (including MEDLINE), interactive health tutorials, drug information, directories, organizations, publications, and consumer health libraries. People can access MedlinePlus at <http://medlineplus.gov> on the Internet.

Loansome Doc® is an NLM service that allows users to order full-text copies of articles found in MEDLINE. Users must establish an agreement with a library that uses DOCLINE®, the NLM's automated interlibrary loan request and referral system, and register to use Loansome Doc. A fee is usually charged by the ordering library. Charges for copies of articles and other services may vary from library to library. Access to Loansome Doc is available through the PubMed and NLM Gateway Web sites.

For more information on NLM programs, services, and hours of operation, individuals may contact the Office of Communications and Public Liaison at 1-888-FIND-NLM (1-888-346-3656) or 301-594-5983. The address is 8600 Rockville Pike, Bethesda,

MD 20894. Online assistance is available on the NLM's Web site at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov> through the Contact NLM link on each page, and by e-mail from [custserv@nlm.nih.gov](mailto:custserv@nlm.nih.gov).

### *National Network of Libraries of Medicine*

The National Network of Libraries of Medicine (NN/LM) directs health professionals, educators, and the general public to health care information resources. Inquirers are directed to medical libraries in their region, which can provide assistance with research. Further information about the Network is available by calling 1-800-338-7657, or by visiting the NN/LM Web site at <http://nnlm.gov> on the Internet.

### *Federal Depository Library Program*

The Federal Depository Library Program (FDLP) was established by the U.S. Congress to ensure that the American public has permanent access to Government publications and information free of charge. The program disseminates information products to Federal depository libraries in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and the U.S. territories. Inquirers can search for Federal publications and Federal depository libraries in their state or region on the program's Web site at <http://www.gpoaccess.gov/libraries.html> on the Internet.

### *Healthfinder*

Healthfinder® is a Web site created by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide a free gateway to reliable online consumer health information. It offers information from selected online publications, clearinghouses, databases, and Web sites, as well as support and self-help groups. Healthfinder also provides links to the Web sites of

Government agencies and nonprofit organizations that provide health information for the public. Healthfinder is located at <http://www.healthfinder.gov> on the Internet.

### ***Public, University, and Medical Libraries***

Books and articles about cancer are available in public, university, hospital, and medical school libraries. However, not all hospital and medical school libraries are open to the public, so it is advisable to ask about their policies and to find out whether particular journals or books are available. If materials cannot be borrowed, most libraries have photocopying facilities; they usually charge a fee for this service. Librarians can provide help with locating and using resources. If journals are not available at a particular library, the staff can usually arrange an interlibrary loan.

The *Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature* is an index of articles in over 225 popular, nontechnical magazines. This publication is available in most public libraries in print or electronically.

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### **Related Resources**

#### **Publications (available at <http://www.cancer.gov/publications>)**

- Cancer Facts 1.20, *Ordering National Cancer Institute Publications: Questions and Answers*
- Cancer Facts 1.23, *The U.S. National Cancer Institute*
- Cancer Facts 2.2, *PDQ®: Questions and Answers*
- Cancer Facts 2.5, *The Cancer Information Service: Questions and Answers*
- Cancer Facts 2.9, *Guide to National Cancer Institute Information Resources for Patients and the Public*
- Cancer Facts 2.10, *How To Evaluate Health Information on the Internet: Questions and Answers*
- Cancer Facts 2.11, *Clinical Trials: Questions and Answers*

## **National Cancer Institute (NCI) Resources**

### **Cancer Information Service (toll-free)**

Telephone: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY: 1-800-332-8615

### **Online**

NCI's Web site: <http://www.cancer.gov>

*LiveHelp*, NCI's live online assistance:

<https://cissecure.nci.nih.gov/livehelp/welcome.asp>

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