
CANCER FACTS

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

The Cancer Information Service: Questions and Answers

Key Points

- The Cancer Information Service (CIS) is a program of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Nation's lead agency for cancer research (see Question 1).
- The CIS assists the public in several ways (see Question 2).
- Through its Partnership Program, the CIS collaborates with established national, state, and regional organizations to reach medically underserved audiences with cancer information (see Question 3).
- The ability to conduct health communications research is a unique aspect of the CIS (see Question 4).

1. What is the Cancer Information Service?

The Cancer Information Service (CIS) is a program of the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the Nation's lead agency for cancer research. As a resource for information and education about cancer, the CIS is a leader in helping people, particularly those who are medically underserved and who suffer from cancer health disparities, become active participants in their own health care by providing the latest information on cancer in understandable language. Through its network of regional offices, the CIS serves the United States, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and the Pacific Islands.

For over 25 years, the Cancer Information Service has provided the latest and most accurate cancer information to patients and families, the public, and health professionals by:

- interacting with people one-on-one through its Information Service,
- working with organizations through its Partnership Program,

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- participating in research efforts to find the best ways to help people adopt healthier behaviors,
- providing access to NCI information over the Internet, and
- providing smoking cessation assistance through the Information Service and supporting regional tobacco control efforts through its Partnership Program.

2. **How does the CIS assist the public?**

Through the CIS toll-free telephone service (**1-800-4-CANCER**), callers speak with knowledgeable, caring staff who are experienced at explaining medical information in easy-to-understand terms. CIS information specialists answer calls in English and Spanish. The CIS serves deaf and hard of hearing callers through the toll-free TTY number (**1-800-332-8615**). Information Specialists also provide assistance to smokers through NCI's Smoking Quitline at **1-877-44U-QUIT**. CIS staff have access to comprehensive, accurate information from the NCI on a range of cancer topics, including the most recent advances in cancer treatment. They take as much time as each caller needs, provide thorough and personalized attention, and keep all calls confidential. The CIS also provides live, online assistance to users of NCI Web sites through *LiveHelp*, an instant messaging service in English that is available from 9:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday. Through *LiveHelp*, information specialists provide answers to questions about cancer and help in navigating Cancer.gov, the NCI's Web site.

Through the telephone numbers or *LiveHelp* service, CIS users receive:

- answers to their questions about cancer, including ways to prevent cancer, symptoms and risks, diagnosis, current treatments, and research studies;
- written materials from the NCI;
- referrals to clinical trials and cancer-related services, such as treatment centers, mammography facilities, or other cancer organizations; and
- assistance in quitting smoking from information specialists trained in smoking cessation counseling.

3. **What kind of assistance does the CIS Partnership Program offer?**

Through its Partnership Program, the CIS collaborates with established national, state, and regional organizations to reach minority and medically underserved audiences with cancer information. Partnership Program staff provide assistance to organizations developing programs that focus on breast and cervical cancer, clinical trials, tobacco control, and cancer awareness for special populations. To reach those in need, the CIS:

- helps bring cancer information to people who do not traditionally seek health information or who may have difficulties doing so because of educational, financial, cultural, or language barriers;
- provides expertise to organizations to help strengthen their ability to inform people they serve about cancer; and
- links organizations with similar goals and helps them plan and evaluate programs, develop coalitions, conduct training on cancer-related topics, and use NCI resources.

4. How do CIS research efforts assist the public?

The CIS plays an important role in research by studying the most effective ways to communicate with people about healthy lifestyles; health risks; and options for preventing, diagnosing, and treating cancer. The ability to conduct health communications research is a unique aspect of the CIS. Results from these research studies can be applied to improving the way the CIS communicates about cancer and can help other programs communicate more effectively.

5. How do people reach the Cancer Information Service?

To speak with a CIS information specialist:

- Call 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237), 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time, Monday through Friday.
- Deaf or hard of hearing callers with TTY equipment may call 1-800-332-8615.

To obtain smoking cessation assistance:

- Call NCI's Smoking Quitline at 1-877-44U-QUIT, 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. local time.

To obtain online assistance in English:

- Visit the NCI Web site at <http://cancer.gov/> and click on the *LiveHelp* link between 9:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Eastern time, Monday through Friday.

For information 24 hours a day, 7 days a week:

- Call 1-800-4-CANCER and select option 4 to hear recorded information at any time.

- Visit NCI's Web site at <http://cancer.gov> on the Internet.
- Visit the CIS Web site at <http://cancer.gov/cis> on the Internet.

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Sources of National Cancer Institute Information

Cancer Information Service

Toll-free: 1-800-4-CANCER (1-800-422-6237)

TTY (for deaf and hard of hearing callers): 1-800-332-8615

NCI Online

Internet

Use <http://cancer.gov> to reach the NCI's Web site.

LiveHelp

Cancer Information Specialists offer online assistance through the *LiveHelp* link on the NCI's Web site.

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