

Healthy Living

Listen: Get Tested for Liver Cancer, One Man's Story

Here, from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is a look at liver cancer—and how you can avoid it.

(NAPSA)—Gary, 61, never really had health problems. “Before this, I can’t remember the last time I was sick twice in a year,” he says.

So an illness caught him off guard in 2013. When doctors suggested he go for more tests, he knew his condition was more severe than he first guessed. But the test results found something he never expected: Gary had liver cancer.

The Condition

The number of new cases of liver cancer is on the rise in the United States. Every year, about 28,000 people are diagnosed with it and 23,000 people die from it, according to the CDC. More men than women get liver cancer and it kills approximately twice as many men as women.

The Problem

There are no recommended regular screening tests for liver cancer. “Most people don’t realize they have it until it’s much later on,” says Gary. But people can still take steps to reduce their risk of developing liver cancer.

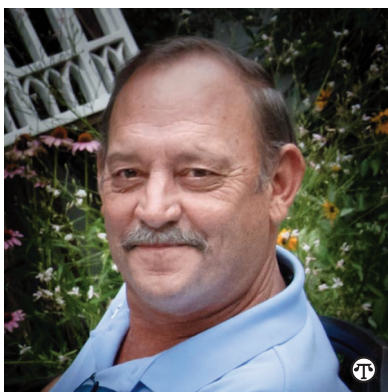
“I had hepatitis C, as a matter of fact,” Gary says. “I never knew it until after I’d been out of the hospital. The doctor asked, ‘How long have you had hepatitis C?’ And I said, ‘I didn’t even know I had it!’”

When left untreated, hepatitis, a viral infection of the liver, can lead to the most common type of liver cancer.

According to the most recent available data, as many as 2.2 million people in the U.S. could be living with chronic hepatitis B infection, and as many as 3.5 million people could be living with chronic hepatitis C infection. Hepatitis C is especially common among people like Gary who were born between 1945 and 1965 (sometimes called “baby boomers”)—people who are between the ages of 50 and 70.

What To Do

The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends that people in this age range get a one-time test for hepatitis C. Your doctor can help you find ways to manage your risk and treat the hepatitis if the test is positive. People with hepatitis B or hepati-



Gary, who has liver cancer, urges everyone his age to learn more about liver cancer risk factors.

tis C typically have no symptoms and can carry the disease for years without knowing.

A vaccine for hepatitis B is routinely given to newborns and may prevent hepatitis B infection, which can also lead to liver cancer. If you haven’t been vaccinated, ask your health care provider about the hepatitis B vaccine.

Other risk factors that can contribute to a higher chance of getting liver cancer include heavy alcohol use, obesity, cigarette smoking, type 2 diabetes, and certain other diseases that affect the liver. You can help control some of these risk factors with healthy lifestyle habits.

Gary is currently receiving treatment to shrink the tumors in his liver. One tumor has been significantly reduced, and another has shrunk so much that scans can no longer detect it. But the cancer may never go away entirely. “One thing I can do is help other people in the process of treatment. Maybe they don’t find the cure for liver cancer with me, but maybe I can help them find a cure. I also tell all my friends and family about the risk factors for liver cancer.”

Learn More

For further information, call (800) CDC-INFO or visit www.cdc.gov/cancer/liver. To learn about hepatitis C, visit www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/HCV, and for more information about the disease’s link to liver cancer, visit www.cdc.gov/knowmorehepatitis. To learn more about the hepatitis B vaccine, go to www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hepb.