

## What is cancer? animation

Cancer starts in our cells. Cells make up the organs and tissues of our body. Each cell has a control centre called a nucleus.

A nucleus gets signals from the body to say when the cell should divide and grow and when it should stop. The nucleus then tells the cell what to do. Usually cells divide in a controlled way to make new cells.

When a cell is no longer needed or cannot be repaired, it gets a signal to stop working and die. Sometimes the signals go wrong and the cell becomes abnormal.

The cells keep dividing and make more abnormal cells. These cells form a lump called a tumour. Not all lumps are cancer.

Doctors can take some cells from the lump. This is called a biopsy. They will look at the cells under a microscope and check if the lump is cancer or not.

When talking about cancer, it helps to know a little bit about the lymphatic system. The lymphatic system helps to protect us from infection and disease.

It is part of the immune system.

It's made up of groups of lymph nodes throughout the body. These are also called glands and are connected by fine tubes. They filter out germs and disease. When you have an infection, lymph nodes often swell as they fight the infection.

Sometimes, cancer cells spread from where the cancer first started to other parts of the body. They can travel through the lymphatic system or the blood. When the cells reach another part of the body they may begin to grow and form another tumour.

We're getting better at finding and treating cancer and many people with cancer can be cured. Even if a cancer cannot be cured, it can often be controlled with treatment.

Macmillan Cancer Support. We'll do whatever it takes

For information, support or just someone to talk to,  
call **0808 808 00 00** or visit **macmillan.org.uk**