

» GLOSSARY OF COMMON FORMS OF CANCER

ADENOCARCINOMA: Cancer that starts in any glandular tissue, such as the ducts or lobules of the breast

BASAL CELL CARCINOMA: The most common nonmelanoma skin cancer. It begins in the lowest layer of the epidermis, called the basal cell layer. It usually develops on sun-exposed areas, especially the head and neck. Basal cell cancer is slow growing and is not likely to spread to distant parts of the body.

BREAST CANCER: Cancer that starts in the breast. The main types of breast cancer are:

- Ductal carcinoma *in situ* (in place; localized and confined to one area; a very early stage of cancer)
- Invasive ductal carcinoma
- Invasive lobular carcinoma
- Lobular carcinoma *in situ* (opinions vary in whether this is a true cancer)
- Medullary carcinoma
- Paget's disease of the nipple

CARCINOMA: A malignant tumor that begins in the lining layer of the organs. At least 80% of all cancers are carcinomas.

CARCINOMA *IN SITU*: An early stage of cancer in which the tumor is confined to the organ where it first developed. The disease has not invaded other parts of the organ or spread to distant parts of the body. Most *in situ* carcinomas are highly curable.

HODGKIN'S DISEASE: An often curable type of cancer that affects the lymphatic system

INVASIVE DUCTAL CARCINOMA: A cancer that starts in the milk passages (ducts) of the breast and then breaks through the duct wall, where it invades the fatty tissue of the breast. When it reaches this point, it has the potential to spread elsewhere in the breast, as well as to other parts of the body through the bloodstream and lymphatic system. This the most common type of breast cancer, accounting for about 80% of breast malignancies.

INVASIVE CANCER: Cancer that has spread beyond the layer of cells where it first developed to involve adjacent tissue

INVASIVE LOBULAR CARCINOMA: Cancer that starts in the milk-producing glands (lobules) of the breast and then breaks through the lobule walls to involve the nearby fatty tissue. From there, it may spread elsewhere in the breast. About 15% of invasive breast cancers are invasive lobular carcinoma. This cancer is often hard to detect by physical examination or even by mammography.

LEUKEMIA: Cancer of the blood or blood-forming tissues. People with leukemia often have a noticeable increase in white blood cells.

LOBULAR CARCINOMA *IN SITU*: An early type of breast cancer that develops within the milk-producing glands (lobules) of

the breast and does not penetrate through the wall of the lobules. Researchers think that most cases of lobular carcinoma *in situ* do not progress to invasive lobular cancer. However, having this type of cancer places a woman at increased risk of developing an invasive breast cancer later in life. For this reason, it's important for women with lobular carcinoma *in situ* to have a physical examination three times a year and an annual mammogram.

LOCAL OR LOCALIZED CANCER: Cancer that is confined to the organ where it started; that is, it has not spread to distant parts of the body

LYMPHOCYTIC LEUKEMIA: Any of several types of leukemia involving an abnormality of cells that are precursors to lymphocytes, one of the two main types of white blood cells

LYMPHOMA: Cancer of the lymphatic system, a network of thin vessels and nodes throughout the body. Its function is to fight infection. Lymphoma involves a type of white blood cells called lymphocytes. The two main types of lymphoma are Hodgkin's disease and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. The treatments for these two types of lymphomas are very different.

MELANOMA: A cancerous tumor that begins in the cells that determine skin color. Melanoma is almost always curable in its early stages. It is likely to spread, however, and once it has spread to other parts of the body, the chances for a cure are much lower.

MUCINOUS CARCINOMA: A type of carcinoma that is formed by mucus-producing cells

MYELOID LEUKEMIA: Any of several types of leukemia involving myelocytes, precursors of one of the two main types of white blood cells. There are two main groups, acute myeloid leukemia and chronic myelogenous leukemia; there are eight subtypes of acute myeloid leukemia.

NONMYELOID CANCERS: All cancers other than myeloid leukemias. These nonmyeloid cancers include all types of carcinoma, sarcoma, melanoma, lymphomas, lymphocytic leukemias, and multiple myeloma.

PAGET (PA-JET) DISEASE OF THE NIPPLE: A rare form of breast cancer that begins in the milk passages (ducts) and spreads to the skin of the nipple and areola. This affected skin may appear crusted, scaly, red, or oozing. The prognosis is generally better if these nipple changes are the only sign of breast disease and no lump can be felt.

SARCOMA: A malignant tumor growing from connective tissues, such as cartilage, fat, muscle, or bone

SQUAMOUS CELL CARCINOMA: Cancer that begins in nonglandular cells (e.g., skin)