

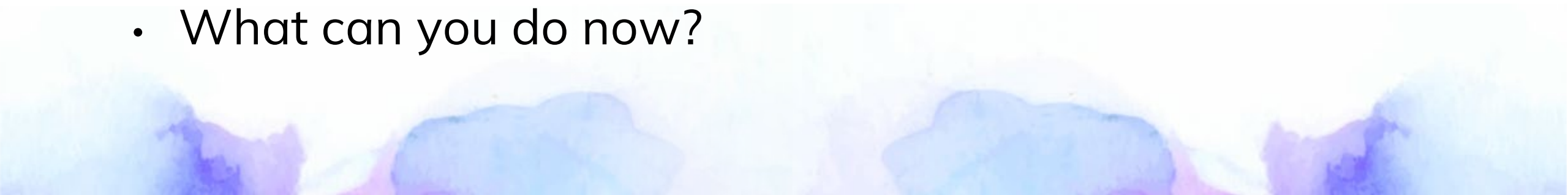


*What you really  
need to know about  
cancer and its  
misconceptions.*



# Learning Outcomes

- Misconceptions about cancer.
- How cancer can impact someone's life.
- What can you do now?



# Top 10 Misconceptions about Cancer

1. Cancer is a death sentence
2. Cancer is contagious
3. Chemotherapy is the worst thing imaginable
4. "X " causes cancer
5. Cancer is always genetic
6. Cancer is always environmental
7. Pregnant people can not be treated for cancer
8. You can't get lung cancer if you don't smoke
9. If air touches cancer, it will spread
10. Cancer will always recur



# Cancer is a death sentence

- 5 year survival:
  - Breast: >90%
  - Prostate: >96%
  - Colorectal: 65%
  - Lung, localized: 61%



**FALSE**





# Cancer is contagious

- Cancer is NOT contagious
- However, certain infections can increase risk of certain cancers





# Chemotherapy is evil

- Side effects certainly exist, but supportive medications have vastly improved tolerance

**FALSE**





# “X” causes cancer

- Deodorant
- Artificial sweeteners
- Cell phones
- Sugar
- Tobacco
- Alcohol

**COMPLICATED**



# Cancer is always genetic

- The majority of cases of cancer are sporadic (random) and cancer is more common as we age
- The majority of people who developed cancer do not have a family history
- But important to identify known mutations to screen effectively and lessen risk

**FALSE**



# Cancer is always environmental

- Environmental risk factors can play a role, but development of cancer likely involves multiple causes, including exposures, genetics and other unknown factors

**FALSE**



# Pregnant people can't be treated

- Certain diagnostic tests and treatments must be avoided in some trimesters of pregnancy
- There are safe and effective ways to treat cancer in a pregnant person without harming the developing fetus



# No smoking = no lung cancer

- The vast majority of lung cancer, 80-90%, occur in people with history of tobacco smoking
- Lung cancer can also occur due to other exposures (second-hand smoke, radon)
- 10-20% of lung cancers occur in non-smokers

**FALSE**

# Air touching cancer = spread

- Cancers, by definition, can spread and recur
- Biopsies or exposure to air do NOT cause spread or increase chance of recurrence

**FALSE**

# Cancer will always recur

- Most cancers do not recur, especially when caught early
- The 5-year survival rate for all cancers combined has increased from 39% in the 1960's to 68% currently

**FALSE**



# What is true about cancer?

- Screening is key, and if caught early, cancer is often highly curable
- Prevention is key
- Treatment is not a picnic, but it is doable
- Advances in treatment are being made literally every year
- Cancer can change many aspects of life, but it does not have to stop you from a good life
- Support exists



In one study, **42%** of participants reported a **SIGNIFICANT FINANCIAL BURDEN**

**As a result:**

- partially filled a prescription **19%**
- took less than the prescribed amount of medication **20%**
- avoided filling prescriptions **24%**
- used their savings to help cover out-of-pocket expenses **46%**
- reduced spending on food & clothing **46%**
- cut back on leisure activities **68%**



(Zafara 2013)



A more recent study found that **cancer patients are more than twice as likely to declare bankruptcy** as those without a cancer diagnosis.\*

\*Ramsey S, Blough D, Kirchhoff A, et al. [Washington State cancer patients found to be at greater risk for bankruptcy than people without a cancer diagnosis](#). Health Aff (Millwood). 013;32(6):1143-1152.

- On average, caregivers spend:
  - **13 days each month** on tasks such as shopping, food preparation, housekeeping, laundry, transportation, and giving medication;
  - **6 days per month** on feeding, dressing, grooming, walking, bathing, and assistance toileting;
  - **13 hours per month** researching care services or information on disease, coordinating physician visits or managing financial matters.\*

\*Gallup-Healthways. (2011). Gallup-Healthways Well-Being Index



# Resources

- MHMR of Tarrant County
- AuntBertha.com
- Triage Cancer
- 2-1-1 Tarrant County United Way  
(2-1-1 from landline or 817-258-8100 from cell)
- Suicide and Crisis Center of North Texas

Cancer Care Services  
(817) 921-0653

[info@cancercareservices.org](mailto:info@cancercareservices.org)

[www.cancercareservices.org](http://www.cancercareservices.org)



@cancercareservices