

## WHAT IS CANCER?



### A simplified, stepwise treatise by Daniel Rubin, ND, FABNO

Many people have often wondered what the answer to this question is. Cancer is slowly becoming the number one killer of people in the United States, but I do not think that all people with cancer really understand what it means to have cancer nor how a cancer develops.

Nor do I think that everybody with cancer actually stops to think about these issues, and understanding not only the answers to them but the reason for requiring such information is important for anyone with cancer.

1. Cancer is a part of one's body. Cancer arises from tissues already inside one's body (e.g. someone does not necessarily become 'infected' with cancer and then grows a tumor). *Thus the cancer is part of one's self.* That does not mean that someone with cancer necessarily caused the cancer to grow within themselves.
2. This means that the once normal tissues in the body somehow turned cancerous and to do so there had to be some type of influence on the tissues that turned cancerous (from normal) in order to induce such a change. This influence can be genetic, environmental (toxic), viral or other.
3. This change is a result of a long process in the body that, for a period of time could be resisted by the body, but eventually it overwhelmed the body's defenses and the local cells became cancerous.
4. Becoming cancerous only means that there was some type of influence on the genes in one's cells and somewhere along the way, the DNA in those genes was damaged. This damage caused the cell to behave improperly and when the cell divided (as all cells normally do, some cells more frequently than others) the new cell also bore the same damaged DNA. And so on, and so on....
5. Cancer is not entirely a single cellular disease. Although a cancer usually arises from one type of cell (colon cancer or ovarian cancer, for instance) it is a multifactorial event that usually arises from the causes mentioned above. Initially the immune system fights against the cancer cells, but over time and as the carcinogenic process continues, the immune system becomes overwhelmed.
6. Because the cancer is part of a person, the rest of their body does not necessarily 'see' the cancer as foreign; thus when the immune system is patrolling the body, the white blood cells sometimes bypass the cancerous cells. This is only one of the many ways that cancer cells evade immune surveillance.
7. Because the cancer can evade the immune system, it is able to establish itself, grow and proliferate, thus establishing itself as a tumor.
8. It then may be allowed to migrate, thereby becoming *metastatic*.

It is crucial for someone with cancer to understand these points so one can better understand how, and perhaps, why, they developed a cancer. After one realizes these points and is able to answer the 'how and why' that follow, they may understand better, how to begin the healing process from their cancer.