



“Let’s Talk Health”

Cancers

DISCUSSION AID 

INTRODUCTION

This talk has been developed to assist the person facilitating the “Let’s talk health” Week” topic on Cancers. It provides pointers to get the conversation started and is not a full explanation of all health and safety requirements, related to this subject, and should not be relied upon as such.

It’s important to talk about Cancer. Talking more openly about how people can reduce their risk of cancer and spotting cancer early could help save thousands of lives. Can you name 4 of the more common types of Cancer?

Lung, skin, bone, organ, prostate.

What are the main sources of carcinogens and occupational cancers on construction sites?

Asbestos, Dusts (silica & wood), Diesel Fumes, Solar Radiation, certain paints.

See also other related topics in the ‘Let’s Talk Health’ series.

What is silica and where would you find it?

Silica is a natural substance found in most rocks, sand and clay and in products such as bricks and concrete. In the workplace these materials create dust when they are cut, sanded, carved etc.

Some of this dust may be fine enough to breathe deeply into the lungs and cause harm to health. The fine dust is called respirable crystalline silica (RCS) and is too fine to see with normal lighting.



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What type of construction jobs can create silica dust?

Cutting concrete, cutting blocks, and kerbs, scabbling/grinding, drilling, sawing, abrasive blasting, dry/wet coring, sanding wood/plasterboard.

What controls would you put in place for these activities to reduce the exposure?

Change of product/method, off site cutting, dust extraction/LEV, wet cutting, respiratory equipment.

What is the main cause of skin cancer and what is the main symptom?

Answer: UV radiation /sun.

The first symptom of melanoma might be a change in the size, shape, or color of a mole or freckle. You should also let your doctor know about any sores on your skin that don't heal and any new mole or lump.

What can you do to protect yourself from solar radiation?

Wear sunscreen, work indoors or shade if possible, cover up, stay hydrated, be aware.



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What are other common cancers that affect men, name 3?

Most Common Cancers in men:

- Prostate Cancer. Prostate cancer is the No. 1 cancer risk for men.
- Lung Cancer. Lung cancer strikes about 81 of every 100,000 men.
- Colorectal Cancer. Colorectal cancer (cancer of the colon or rectum).
- Bladder Cancer. Bladder cancer is the fourth most common cancer in men.

What can you do every day to protect yourself from cancers?

Be aware and know the risks and signs, follow advice, reduce exposure, stopping smoking, use control measures and PPE, healthy diet & exercise, reduce stress.

Have you any suggestions for this site or the construction Industry to improve risks to construction workers from cancer?

Potential suggestions include education, enforcement, legislation, occupational hygienists, health checks, information.

More information and resources on occupational cancers is available at:

- Health and Safety Executive (HSE)
- Health and Safety Executive for Northern Ireland (HSENI)
- Cancer Research UK
- Macmillan Cancer Support.
- British Occupational Hygiene Society (BOHS).
- National Health Service (NHS).