

What is bronchial cancer and what are the symptoms? (Qu'est-ce que le cancer bronchique et quels sont les symptômes?)

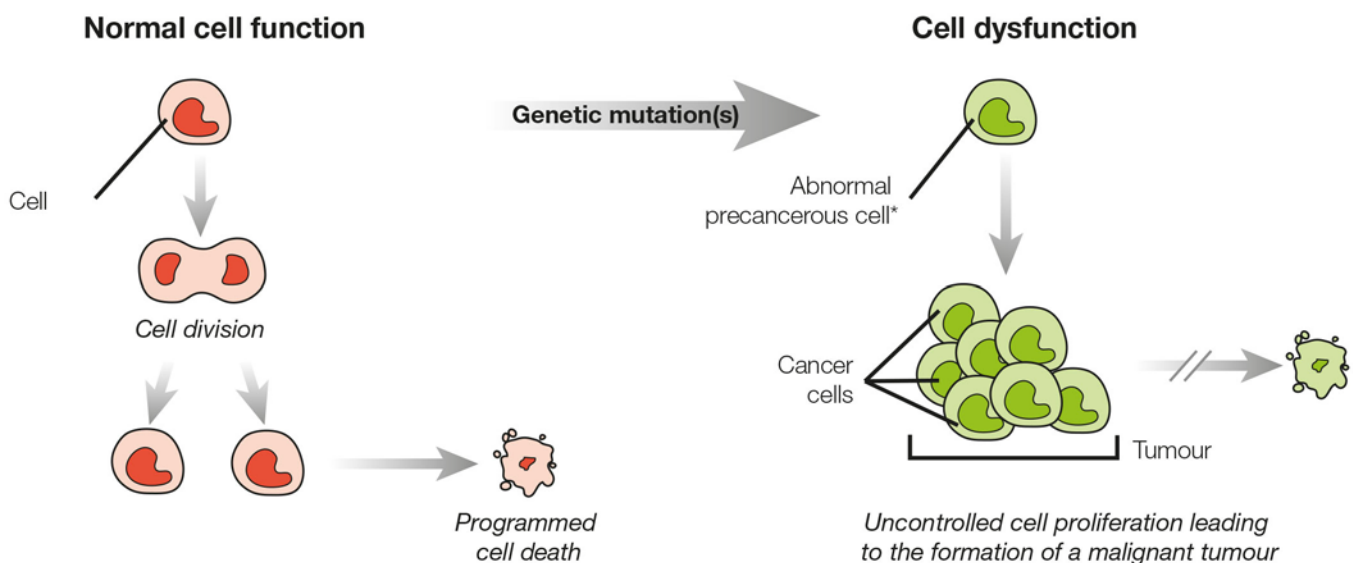
Cancer is a disease based originally on a cellular dysfunction linked to **modifications of the DNA which carries genetic information**. These genetic modifications, also called mutations, can be inherited, the result of chance or due to exposure to a particular risk factor.

In normal times, body cells have a regulated life cycle: to ensure the renewal of our tissues, every day thousands of cells die and are replaced with new ones. Cells reproduce by dividing (this is cell division).

Some cells, with damaged (mutated) DNA become capable of reproducing **indefinitely in an uncontrolled manner**. These are **cancer cells** (or malignant cells). Over time, an ever-growing mass, called a **malignant tumour**, forms.

Malignant tumour cells can acquire the ability to migrate to other parts of the body and develop new tumours there, called metastases.

Normal and abnormal cell cycle leading to the development of cancer



* Precancerous cells accumulate further mutations and begin to proliferate in an uncontrolled way, thereby leading to the formation of a malignant tumour

Bronchial cancer, also called lung cancer, is when a malignant tumour is located in the bronchi. It is a **common disease**: it is the fourth most common cancer in France (1), behind prostate, breast and colorectal cancers.

There are **two main types of lung cancer**, which differ in the size and aspect of the tumoral cells

- **non-small cell cancers** which represent 80% of lung cancers.

- **small-cell cancers** which represent 20% of lung cancers.

Each type of cancer develops and is treated differently.

There are no characteristic symptoms of lung cancer. The disease can even develop with no symptoms being felt. This is why screening for the disease is difficult.

However, lung cancer can be detected after:

- a prolonged cough;
- blood in the sputum;
- respiratory difficulty (dyspnea);
- loss or modification of voice;
- weight loss without dieting;
- intense fatigue;
- prolonged or repeated respiratory infection;
- chest pain.

Sometimes, the occurrence of a symptom reflects the existence of an extension of the disease to other parts of the body (metastases). The symptoms then depend on the organ affected. Sites which can be affected are: the bones, brain, lymph nodes outside the lungs, adrenal glands (located on top of the kidneys) and liver.

The occurrence of this disease is a source of particularly intense emotion and may cause great anxiety: some patients may be afraid of the pain or of suffocation.

=> It is essential to talk to your doctor to treat these problems and reduce their impact on your quality of life.

1. National Cancer Institute. Professional recommendations. Lung Cancer. Therapeutic treatment of non-small cell lung cancer. September 2010.
