

## FACTS ABOUT CANCER

- Cancer is a very common disease.
- 30% to 50% of adults will develop cancer in their lifetime.
- Cancer is a general term for at least 100 different but related diseases.
- Many cancer types have certain known or suspected risk factors associated with it.
- Cancer is almost always caused by a combination of factors that interact in ways that are not yet fully understood.

## CONTACT

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## DEFINITION OF A CANCER CLUSTER:

A greater than expected number of cancers occurring within a group of people, in a geographic area, over a period of time. A greater than expected number is when the observed number of cases is higher than one would typically observe in a similar setting (in a group with similar population, age, race, or gender). Additionally, all of the cases must involve the same type of cancer or types of cancer that are scientifically proven to be caused by an environmental contaminant known to be present in the same geographical area.

## CLUES THAT INDICATE MORE INVESTIGATION IS NEEDED

- A large number of cases of one type of cancer, rather than several different types.
- A rare type of cancer, rather than common types.
- An increased number of cases of a certain type of cancer in an age group that is not usually affected by that type of cancer.

## FACTS ABOUT CANCER CLUSTERS

- Cancer clusters within communities or neighborhoods caused by an environmental carcinogen are rare.
- The majority of cancer clusters identified in the United States have been among groups of workers exposed to carcinogens in the workplace, such as mesothelioma among workers exposed to asbestos or liver cancer among workers exposed to vinyl chloride.
- To date, one cancer cluster has been identified in Montana among vermiculite mine workers in Libby.

## IF YOU SUSPECT A CANCER CLUSTER

- A suspected cancer cluster may be reported to the Cancer Epidemiologist at Montana DPHHS (see contact information).
- Montana DPHHS takes reports of suspected cancer clusters seriously and investigates each report in an appropriate and timely manner.