



Teacher Notes

Cancer Mythbusters

Please Note: Gilda's Club Westchester has created these teacher notes to accompany the Cancer Mythbusters Game. These notes represent the most current information known about cancer as provided by the American Cancer Society. Since cancer research is ongoing and statistics are updated on an annual basis, in the future please refer to www.gildasclubwestchester.org and www.cancer.org for updated information.

Cancer is a virus. BUSTED!

- Some students believe that cancer is a virus or is similar to a virus and can be spread from person to person. Cancer is the rapid growth of abnormal cells. Cancer is the general name for a group of more than 100 diseases in which abnormal cells in a part of the body begin to grow out of control. Cancer is not contagious and cannot be spread from one person to another.

*While cancer is not a virus, emerging research indicates a possible link between some viruses and the development of certain cancers. For example, there is a link between human papillomavirus (HPV) and cervical cancer, hepatitis B and C and liver cancer, and Epstein-Barr virus and Hodgkin's lymphoma. However, cancer itself is not contagious and students do not need to shy away from physical contact with individuals who have a cancer diagnosis.

Discussion Idea: It is ok to hug, kiss, and be close to the person in your life who has cancer.

- Though cancer is not contagious, some forms of cancer do have a genetic link making them more common in certain families and more likely to be genetically passed from parents to children.
- A history of cancer in the family is NOT a guarantee that another family member will also develop cancer. Only 5-10% of cancers are inherited.
- Students should always know their family health history of cancer as well as other health conditions and be sure to tell their doctors about it.

A side effect of cancer is hair loss. BUSTED!

- This statement is busted! Cancer itself does not cause hair loss, but cancer treatments may.
- The 3 most common cancer treatments are chemotherapy, radiation and surgery.
- Chemotherapy may cause hair loss because chemotherapy drugs target rapidly growing cells and cannot distinguish between healthy and abnormal rapidly growing cells. Human hair cells and nail cells are rapidly-growing, so they may be targeted by chemotherapy medications.
- When a patient is done with chemotherapy, his or her hair grows back although it may