Infections are an important cause of many cancers worldwide, especially in economically transitioning countries.

Infections agents are responsible for an estimated 15% of all new cancer cases annually worldwide, of which two-thirds occur in less developed countries (where they account for up to one quarter of all cancers). The four most important cancer-causing infections worldwide are Helicobacter pylori (170,000 cases globally in 2012), human papillomavirus (HPV) (640,000), hepatitis B virus (770,000 cases globally in 2012), human herpesvirus-8 (HHV-8; 40,000 cases, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa), human T-cell lymphotropic virus, liver flukes, and schistosomal infections. Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection also indirectly causes infection-related cancers through immunodepression. In the US, for instance, the proportion of infection-associated cancer in people with HIV (4%) is 10 times larger than in the general US population (0.4%).

Powerful prevention tools exist for infection-related cancer, including HPV and HBV vaccines, screening for HPV-driven cervical precancer, and drugs to treat HBV, HIV, Helicobacter pylori, and HHV-8 infections.