



Research
Awareness
Progress

Pancreatic Cancer Outreach & Awareness

Teacher Packet

About This Packet

This teacher packet is designed to help you confidently guide students through pancreatic cancer awareness and outreach projects. It includes background information, facilitation tips, scripts, FAQs, and ready-to-use activity templates. Your leadership helps students build empathy, communication skills, and a sense of agency as they learn about a serious health issue that affects families everywhere.

1. A Note to Teachers

Thank you for supporting this project. When you supervise student-led outreach, you're doing more than teaching health content ; you're empowering young people to become informed, compassionate advocates. Your guidance helps them turn curiosity into action, and action into meaningful community impact. The Jo-Ann Danzis Foundation is grateful for educators like you who create safe, thoughtful spaces for students to learn and lead.

2. Teacher Background: Understanding Pancreatic Cancer

What the Pancreas Does

- Produces digestive enzymes
- Regulates blood sugar
- Located deep in the abdomen, behind the stomach

What Pancreatic Cancer Is

- A malignant tumor that begins in the pancreas
- Often diagnosed late because early symptoms are vague
- One of the most aggressive cancers

Why Early Detection Is Difficult

Symptoms often appear only after the cancer has grown or spread. Early signs can mimic common issues like indigestion or back strain.

Common symptoms:

- Abdominal or back pain
- Jaundice
- Unexplained weight loss
- Digestive changes
- New or worsening diabetes

Risk Factors

Non-modifiable:

- Age
- Family history
- Genetic mutations (BRCA1/2, PALB2, Lynch syndrome, etc.)

Modifiable:

- Smoking
- Obesity
- Heavy alcohol use
- Diet high in processed/red meat
- Physical inactivity

Why This Matters for Young People

- Rates are rising in adults under 50
- Many young people don't know symptoms
- Lifestyle habits formed in adolescence influence long-term risk

3. Your Role as a Teacher

You don't need to be a medical expert. Your role is to:

- Provide structure and guidance
- Help students check facts
- Support emotional needs

- Encourage creativity and leadership
- Ensure messaging is accurate and age-appropriate

These projects work best when teachers:

- Allow student ownership
- Offer gentle direction
- Celebrate effort, not perfection

4. Ready-to-Use Activities

A. Classroom Mini-Lesson (15–30 minutes)

Materials:

- Slides (optional)
- One-page fact sheet
- Whiteboard or projector

Flow:

1. Warm-up question: “What do you know about pancreatic cancer?”
2. Pancreas 101
3. Cancer basics
4. Why young people should care
5. Reflection prompt: “What surprised you most?”

B. Awareness Booth

Student tasks:

- Create posters
- Prepare myth/fact cards
- Make a QR code resource sheet

Teacher tasks:

- Approve materials
- Supervise booth interactions
- Support students if sensitive stories arise

C. School-Wide Campaign

Ideas:

- Purple Week
- Morning announcements
- Poster series

- Social media posts

Teacher tasks:

- Approve messaging
- Coordinate with administration
- Help students manage logistics

5. Teacher Scripts

Introducing the Project

“Today we’re starting a project that blends science, health literacy, and community leadership. Pancreatic cancer is a disease that often goes unnoticed until it’s advanced, and young people can play a powerful role in raising awareness.”

Addressing Sensitive Topics

“It’s okay if this feels heavy. Cancer affects many families. If you need a moment or want to talk privately, I’m here.”

Encouraging Leadership

“You don’t need to be a medical expert to make a difference. Your creativity and willingness to learn are what make this project meaningful.”

6. FAQ for Teachers

Q: Can teenagers get pancreatic cancer?

A: It’s extremely rare, but cases in adults under 50 are rising.

Q: What causes it?

A: Usually a mix of genetics, lifestyle, and chance.

Q: Can it be prevented?

A: Not entirely, but healthy habits reduce risk.

Q: Is it always fatal?

A: No. Treatments are improving, especially when caught early.

Q: What should someone do if they have symptoms?

A: Talk to a healthcare professional. Symptoms can be caused by many things, but it's always better to check.

7. Emotional Support Tips

Some students may have:

- A family member with cancer
- Anxiety about health topics
- Personal grief

Teacher strategies:

- Normalize emotional reactions
- Offer private check-ins
- Provide alternative assignments if needed

8. Resource Sheet (Printable)

Trusted Organizations:

- American Cancer Society
- National Cancer Institute
- Pancreatic Cancer Action Network (PanCAN)
- Hirshberg Foundation

Suggested QR Codes:

- Pancreatic cancer symptoms
- Risk factors
- How to support families
- Student-friendly fact sheets

9. Printable Templates

A. Morning Announcement Script

“Good morning. This week we’re raising awareness about pancreatic cancer. It’s a disease that often goes unnoticed until it’s advanced, and many young people don’t know the early signs. Take a moment today to learn one new fact – awareness saves time, and time saves lives.”

B. Poster Headings

- “What Does the Pancreas Do?”
- “Know the Signs”

- “Myth vs. Fact”
- “Why Awareness Matters”
- “Purple Week: Take Action”

C. Student Reflection Sheet

1. **What did you learn today?**
2. **What surprised you?**
3. **How can awareness help others?**
4. **What action would you like to take?**

10. Closing Message to Teachers

Your guidance transforms this project from a lesson into a life skill. You’re helping students learn how to communicate health information, advocate for others, and take action on issues that matter. The Jo-Ann Danzis Foundation is grateful for your leadership, compassion, and commitment to empowering the next generation.