

NCHS Data on Cancer

About NCHS

The CDC's National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS) is the nation's principal health statistics agency, providing data to identify and address health issues. NCHS compiles statistical information to help guide public health and health policy decisions.

Collaborating with other public and private health partners, NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. This process provides multiple perspectives to help understand the population's health, influences on health, and health outcomes.

Cancer

Cancer is one of the most common chronic diseases in the United States. Cancer comprises various conditions, characterized by the unrestrained growth of cells that invade surrounding tissue and spread to other body sites. These conditions are often identified by site of origin: lung, breast, prostate, and colon cancers, for example, are among the most familiar.

Cancer has a major impact on the American people. Cancer results in a significant need for health care use including doctor visits, hospitalizations and home or hospice care.

Key Findings

Prevalence (18 years and older)

- Average annual data from 1999–2000 found nearly 13 million adults reporting a cancer diagnosis. Women reported having cancer more often than men (7.2 percent versus 5.6 percent).
- Approximately 7.8 percent of non-Hispanic white, 3.1 percent of non-Hispanic black, and 2.2 percent of Hispanic adults reported a history of cancer.
- Cancer prevalence increased with age. Among adults 18-44, 45-64, 65-74 and 75 or more years, the prevalence was 2.0 percent, 7.4 percent, 17.3 percent, and 22.8 percent respectively.

Mortality

- In 2000, cancer was the second leading cause of death.
- The death rate for cancer was 199.6 per 100,000 population in 2000, and resulted in approximately 550,000 deaths.
- The percent of all deaths attributed to cancer increased during the last two decades. In 2000, it accounted for 23.0 percent of all deaths. Cancer deaths were more common in males (24.3 percent) than in females (21.8 percent).
- Cancer caused 13.7 percent of deaths among children 5–9 years of age in 2000.

Key Findings continued

Health care utilization

- In 2000, 1.1 million hospitalizations had cancer as the first listed diagnosis.
- Nearly 30,000 of these hospitalizations were for children less than 18 years of age.
- In 1999-2000, cancer patients had nearly 21 million annual doctor visits.
- Cancer remains the most common first-listed diagnosis for hospice discharges, but the proportion decreased from 75 percent in 1992 to 58 percent in 2000.

Cancer Data Sources

NCHS employs a variety of data collection mechanisms to obtain accurate information from multiple sources. They include:

- **National Health Interview Survey** – obtains information on the nation’s health status through confidential household interviews that measure: health status and disability, insurance coverage, access to care, use of health services, immunizations (child), health behaviors, injury, and the ability to perform daily activities. This survey measures cancer prevalence and related health care use. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm>
- **National Vital Statistics System** – collects mortality information from death certificates in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, including characteristics of the decedent and underlying and contributing causes of death. Cancer death rates are available from this data system. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss.htm>
- **National Hospital Discharge Survey** - is a national probability survey designed to meet the need for information on characteristics of inpatients discharged from non-Federal short-stay hospitals in the United States. The survey data includes hospitalizations for cancer. Rates shown are based on population estimates from the 1990 census. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/hdasd/nhds.htm>
- **National Hospital Ambulatory Medical Care Survey** – collects information from medical records from a nationally representative sample of short stay nonfederal hospitals about visits to hospital outpatient departments and emergency departments. The information collected is very similar to the National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey. Information from this survey provides estimates of cancer visits to hospital outpatient departments and emergency rooms. Rates shown are based on population estimates from the 1990 census. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/ahcd1.htm>
- **National Ambulatory Medical Care Survey** - conducts surveys of private physician offices to obtain nationally representative information about health care visits including patient demographics, patient complaints, physician diagnoses and prescription medications. This survey provides information on visits to physician offices for cancer. Rates shown are based on population estimates from the 1990 census. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/ahcd/namecsdes.htm>
- **National Home and Hospice Care Survey** - is a continuing series of surveys of home and hospice care agencies in the United States. Information is collected about agencies that provide home and hospice care and about their current patients and discharges and includes care for cancer. Rates shown are based on population estimates from the 1990 census. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/about/major/nhhcsd/nhhcsd.htm>

For further information about NCHS and its programs, visit us at <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs>, or call the Office of Planning, Budget and Legislation at 301-458-4100.