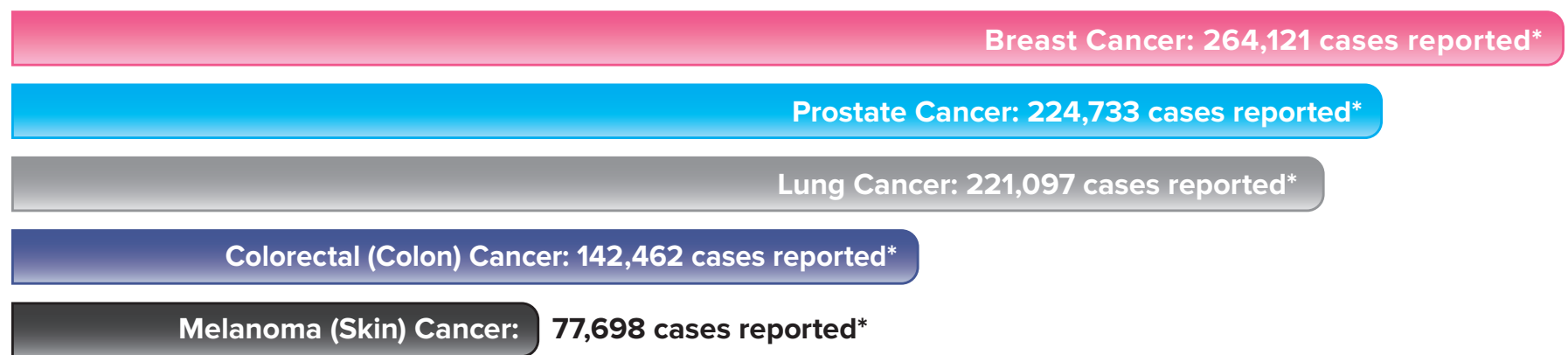


IF CANCER IS A VILLAIN, YOU CAN BE A SUPERHERO

Education and Early Detection are the First Steps in Cancer Prevention

Cancer, a relentless villain that knows no boundaries, continues to pose a significant threat to public health around the world. In the US, this aggressive disease has become a formidable challenge, affecting millions of lives each year. According to studies and research published by the CDC, in 2020 there were 1,603,844 new cases of cancer reported and 602,347 people died of cancer in the U.S. For every 100,000 people, 403 new cancer cases were reported and 144 people died of cancer.

The CDC reported* that from 2019-2020, the most common cancers are:



**In this context, reported cancers are positive diagnoses by a medical professional qualified to do so.*

Five Common Cancers in the United States

One of every five deaths in the United States is due to cancer. According to the CDC, men have higher rates of getting and dying from cancer than women; yet women are disproportionately more impacted by breast cancer as opposed to prostate cancer in men. The CDC reported* that from 2019-2020, most common are:



Breast Cancer: 264,121 cases reported*

Breast cancer stands as the most diagnosed cancer among American women. According to the American Cancer Society, approximately one in eight women will develop invasive breast cancer during their lifetime. This staggering statistic highlights the need for increased awareness, regular screenings and self-examinations to detect the disease in its early stages when treatment outcomes are most favorable. Doctors recommend breast self-examination at home to detect any early signs of breast cancer such as lumps, abnormal bruising, sores that will not heal, or acute pain. [Review the five-step breast exam tutorial created by, breastcancer.org.](#) According to the CDC, mammograms are recommended every two years for women aged forty and above.



Prostate Cancer: 224,733 cases reported*

Prostate cancer is the most prevalent cancer among American men, with one in eight men developing this disease during their lifetime. While controversies surrounding overdiagnosis and overtreatment persist, ongoing research aims to develop more accurate diagnostic tools and targeted treatments, striking a balance between the benefits and potential harms of screening. According to the CDC, prostate cancer screenings should begin at age forty. Doctors recommend being mindful of the early warning signs of prostate cancer, including the presence of lumps, abnormal bruising, discharge or acute pain. If any of these signs are present, consult with your physician promptly.



Lung Cancer: 221,097 cases reported*

Lung cancer, often associated with smoking, remains a leading cause of cancer-related deaths in the United States. It is important to note that non-smokers can also develop lung cancer due to factors like exposure to toxins such as secondhand smoke, radon or occupational hazards. Keeping smoke outside of the home and limiting time in restaurants or venues where indoor smoking is allowed are great prevention methods. The rising incidence of lung cancer has led to intensified efforts in public health campaigns promoting smoking cessation and increased screenings for early detection. The Employee Assistance Program (**EAP**) is a resource to assist in navigating your smoking cessation journey.



Colorectal (Colon) Cancer: 142,462 cases reported*

Colorectal cancer, which includes cancers of the colon and rectum, affects both men and women. This form of cancer often develops from precancerous polyps, which makes preventative health strategies like screenings (i.e. colonoscopies), vital for early detection and intervention. Painful defecation or presence of blood in stool could be early warning signs of colon cancer and prompt a follow-up with your physician, according to the CDC. The recommended age to start receiving colon cancer screenings may vary depending on specific guidelines and individual risk factors. However, in general, most guidelines suggest that individuals should begin regular colon screening at the age of 45 or 50, based on the recommendations of your physician.



Skin Cancer: 77,698 cases reported*

Skin cancer, primarily caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) radiation from the sun or artificial sources like tanning beds, affects millions of Americans every year. According to the CDC, basal and squamous cell carcinomas are the two most common types of skin cancer. They begin in the basal and squamous layers of the skin, respectively. Melanoma, the third most common type of skin cancer, begins in the melanocytes, which are cells found in the skin. At-home prevention strategies can include skin self-examinations, sun protection measures, and routine dermatological screenings are critical in detecting skin cancer early and ensuring effective treatment.

Always involve a medical professional if you believe you have an abnormal rash, skin lesion or infection – slow healing times for the skin can be an early warning sign of low white blood cell count, a symptom of cancer, which impacts overall immunity.

Cancer Screenings Can Make the Difference

Unlock the power of cancer prevention by having vital conversations about screenings with your primary care physician (PCP). Your age, health factors and personal history are key pieces of the puzzle, enabling your PCP to tailor a screening schedule just for you. Screenings are crucial for early detection, which greatly increase the chances of successful treatment. These screenings can detect cancer at its earliest stages, often before symptoms appear.

To assist with your understanding of screening guidelines, we encourage you to review **the American Cancer Society's (ACS) Guidelines for Early Detection of Cancer**. These guidelines are an excellent source to help equip you for a conversation with your PCP and navigate the recommended screening protocols.

If you are enrolled in Cook County's health insurance plan through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Illinois, there are a variety of resources available to learn more about where to go to receive screenings, diagnosis and or treatment options.

Whether you are enrolled in the PPO or HMO plan, it is best to either call the BCBSIL Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card, to learn if a referral is needed to see a specialist and or to find a provider considered in network. Or you can go digital and login or create an account on Blue Access for MembersSM (BAMSM) at bcbsil.com or text "BCBSIL" to 33633 to download the BCBSIL mobile app, and use the Provider Finder[®] tool to search for doctors and hospitals near you that are considered in network. It's best to choose a provider that's in your plan network so you get the most from your plan coverage.

