



CANCER IN 2024:

The Numbers That Change Lives

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the United States. As such, we all know someone who's been impacted by the disease. Doctors diagnose 1.9 million new cases of cancer annually. It's the second leading cause of death in the United States, claiming over 600,000 lives each year. Five types of cancer account for approximately half of all diagnoses: breast, prostate, lung, colorectal, and melanoma.

BREAST CANCER

The National Cancer Institute estimates that 300,000 women and 2,800 men received a breast cancer diagnosis in 2023. It is the most common cancer diagnosis for women in the United States.

Researchers devote considerable time studying breast cancer to improve treatment and screening options. One of the most consequential developments for breast cancer is the rise of breast self-exams. Doctors recommend women over the age of 18 perform a breast self-exam each month. The process is relatively quick and can help with early detection.

Suggestions for incorporating breast self-exams into your routine:

1. Choose a recurring time to perform your self-exam. Avoid days when your breasts may be tender.
2. The best time to do a monthly breast self-exam is about three to five days after your period starts.



Breast cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis among women in the U.S., but is not exclusively for women; men are also susceptible.



FOLLOW THE MOUSE:

We've hyperlinked resources you may want to access. Just hover and click!

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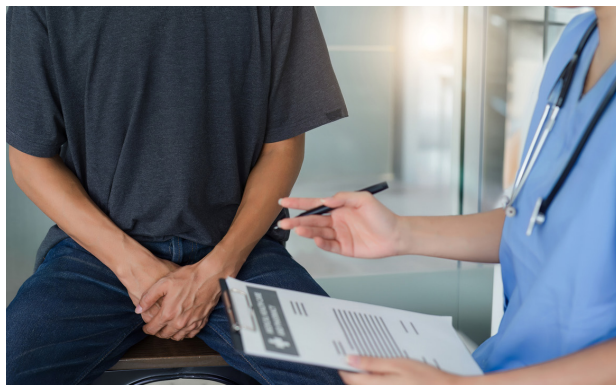
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3. Look at your breasts in a mirror. Note any color, texture, or other changes you see, as well as any dimpling or abnormal discharge.
4. Manually inspect your breasts in the shower or while lying down on a comfortable surface. Use the pads of your fingers to apply pressure to your breast so you can feel any new or changing lumps.
5. If you notice any changes, see your doctor to discuss your next steps.

Anaerobic exercise or strength training is a great way to decrease your body fat percentage. This is important because being overweight or obese increases your risk for heart disease, especially if you're carrying extra weight around your waist. Strength training includes weightlifting, working out with resistance bands, body weight exercises like push-ups and more.

PROSTATE CANCER

The prostate is part of the male reproductive system. Prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis for men, with almost 290,000 diagnoses in 2023. It is also one of the most treatable forms of cancer, 96% of men who have prostate cancer live for five or more years after their diagnosis. According to the American Cancer Society, a relative survival rate compares people with the same type and stage of cancer to people in the overall population. For example, a 5-year relative survival rate for a specific stage of prostate cancer is 90%, means that men who have that cancer are, on average, about 90% as likely as men who don't have that cancer to live for at least 5 years after being diagnosed. Keep in mind that survival rates are estimates and are often based on previous outcomes of large numbers of people who had a specific cancer, but they can't predict what will happen in any person's case. Understandably, these statistics might be confusing and lead you to have more questions. So, be sure to ask your doctor how these numbers might apply to you.



Prostate cancer is the most common cancer diagnosis for men, and is also one of the most treatable. Early diagnosis goes a long way toward successful treatment.

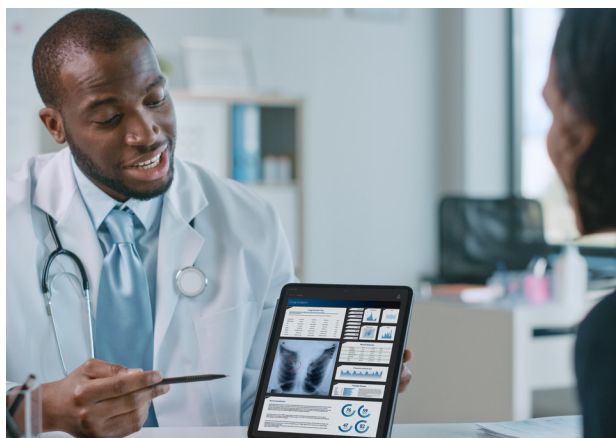
Many men with prostate cancer don't necessarily experience any symptoms. However, when they do, it's usually difficulty with urinating and having a weak urine stream. Other potential indicators of prostate cancer include: may include blood in urine or semen, or erectile dysfunction. Discuss these or any worrisome new symptoms with your healthcare provider.

LUNG CANCER

Doctors diagnosed over 238,000 people with lung cancer in 2023. Lung cancer accounts for the most cancer deaths each year, totaling over 127,000 cases.

There are several warning signs for lung cancer. If you experience any unexplained chest pain, lingering or worsening cough, shortness of breath, or wheezing, you should talk to your healthcare provider. Coughing up blood or bloody mucus is another common symptom.

There's a misconception that lung cancer only happens to people who smoke cigarettes. However, many non-smokers are diagnosed with the disease diagnosis Radon, a natural gas found in rocks, soil, and water, is another cause for lung cancer. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates 1 in 15 homes has high radon levels, increasing the risk of lung cancer for the people who live there.



Lung cancer accounts for the most cancer deaths each year, totaling over 127,000 cases. And smoking is not the only cause: for instance, radon gas can be another cause.

You can lower your risk for developing lung cancer by quitting smoking and testing your home for radon. Please refer to the EPA's Citizen's Guide to Radon to learn how best to protect you and your family!

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COLORECTAL CANCERS

The unexpected death of 43-year-old Chadwick Boseman, critically acclaimed actor, from colon cancer, sent shockwaves across the globe in 2020. Boseman's death raised critical awareness of colorectal cancer among younger adults.

Colorectal cancer has a few common symptoms, including:

- Unexplained weight loss
- Blood in stool or rectal bleeding
- New or increased constipation and/or diarrhea
- Fatigue and weakness

More than 150,000 people received a colorectal cancer diagnosis in 2023 and over 50,000 died. If you have an immediate family member who's been diagnosed with colorectal cancer, the risk doubles. Other risk factors for this disease include smoking, obesity, and inflammatory bowel diseases.

According to the American Society for Gastrointestinal Endoscopy (ASGE), early stages of colorectal cancer usually present no symptoms. It is highly treatable if detected early. Colonoscopy is the only test to prevent colorectal cancer, with its unique ability to remove polyps before they turn into cancer. It is the only screening test recommended at 10-year intervals, because it's by far the best test at finding precancerous polyps. Screening is now recommended to begin at 45 years of age for patients at average risk.

MELANOMA

There are three common types of skin cancer. Basal cell carcinoma (BCC) is very treatable and doesn't usually spread to other areas of the body, so people who have it usually survive unless their immune system is weakened. Squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) is also very treatable, but it's more likely to spread to other parts of your body than BCC. The third common type of skin cancer, melanoma, is the most dangerous kind of skin cancer.

Melanoma forms in the cells that make melanin, the brown pigment in your skin that determines your skin tone and makes moles and other unique markings. It can start in an existing mole on your body but most cases of melanoma are in regular skin. Only 1% of skin cancers are melanoma, but most skin cancer deaths are caused by it because it can easily spread to other parts of the body. Advances in screening and treatment help 94% of people who get melanoma survive five years or longer!

You can examine your skin using the ABCDE's of skin cancer to help detect any possible cancers early. Stand in front of a large mirror while holding a handheld mirror and look for:

- **Asymmetry** — any mole or blemish that isn't symmetrical
- **Border** — jagged or irregular borders
- **Color** — moles with color changes, more than one color or uneven color
- **Diameter** — moles larger than a quarter inch or a pencil eraser
- **Evolving** — any change in a mole can be a sign of cancer, including the signs above or itching, bleeding, sores that won't heal, or any other new symptom



If you have an immediate family member who's been diagnosed with colorectal cancer, your risk of developing it doubles.








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SCREENING SAVES LIVES!

There's been significant progress in cancer screening over the last century. As a result, people are getting diagnosed and treated sooner. And this early detection has improved five-year survival rates for the vast majority of cancers!

Please refer to this screening chart to stay on track with your scheduled cancer screenings:

	CANCER	SCREENING RECOMMENDATIONS
	BREAST CANCER	Mammograms are the standard screening tool for breast cancer. Most women should get their first mammogram at age 50 and every other year after that. If you have a family history or other risk factors, you can choose to start as early as age 40.
	CERVICAL CANCER	Pap tests screen for cervical cancer and human papilloma virus (HPV), which can cause cervical and other cancers. Most people should get their first Pap test at age 21, then every three to five years after. You can also get vaccinated for HPV as early as age 11 to reduce your risk for cervical and other cancers.
	COLORECTAL CANCER	Doctors perform colonoscopies to detect colon cancer and precancerous growths called polyps. You should get your first colonoscopy by age 50 unless you have other risk factors, but you can choose to have your first colorectal cancer screening as early as age 45. If your colonoscopy comes back normal, you can expect to repeat it in 10 years. People who don't have elevated risk for colorectal cancer may choose to have their stool tested every one to three years instead of a colonoscopy. Partner with your healthcare provider to determine which option is best for you.
	PROSTATE CANCER	A simple blood test is the best screening tool for prostate cancer. Your doctor can order a prostate specific antigen (PSA) test. Most men begin screening at age 55, but Black men and people with a family history of prostate cancer may begin as early as age 40. The frequency for screening depends on your personal health history.
	SKIN CANCER	Screening for skin cancer begins as early as age 18. You should visit a healthcare provider for a head-to-toe skin exam if you are at a higher risk for skin cancer, have a personal history of skin cancer, or are concerned about a new or changing mole.

Looking for more information about cancer screening and prevention? Check out Blue Cross Blue Shield's Connect Community blog for cancer screening and prevention information and resources [BCBSIL Connect](#).



Consult with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) to discuss any concerns you have and develop a screening schedule that's best for you. If you don't have a PCP, you can call the Health Advocate number on your BCBSIL member ID card or



[log on to Blue Access for MembersSM \(BAMSM\) bcsil.com](#) and use the Provider Finder. This fast, easy-to-use tool improves members' experience when searching for in-network health care providers.



SOURCES: [Cancer.org](#), [Cancer.gov](#), [MayoClinic.org](#), [CDC.gov](#), [EPA.gov](#), [ClevelandClinic.org](#), [NIH.gov](#), [MayoClinicHealthSystem.org](#), [USPreventiveServicesTaskForce.org](#), [HopkinsMedicine.org](#), [MedlinePlus.gov](#)