

Cancer, 2012

Advances in cancer detection, treatment, and research have led to declines in cancer incidence and death rates. Many cancers can be prevented by reducing risk factors such as tobacco use, physical inactivity, poor nutrition, obesity, and exposure to ultraviolet light. Screening, including mammography, Pap tests, and colonoscopy, can be effective in identifying certain cancers at early stages, when they are more easily treated.^{1,2} Screening for colorectal and cervical cancers can find precancerous lesions that can be treated before they become cancerous.² It is important to track cancers by type, since different types of cancers may have different causes and prevention strategies.

The age-adjusted all-cancer death rate in Maine decreased significantly from 1999 to 2008,³ but cancer remains the leading cause of death among Maine people.⁴ More than 3,000 Mainers die from cancer every year. Maine's age-adjusted all-cancer incidence rate is significantly higher than the U.S. rate, driven at least in part by a significantly higher incidence of lung cancer.³

Cancer-related measures chosen for the State Health Assessment include:³

- Cancer incidence (all cancers)
- Cancer deaths (all cancers)
- Colorectal cancer incidence
- Late stage colorectal cancer incidence
- Colorectal cancer deaths
- Lung cancer incidence
- Lung cancer deaths
- Female breast cancer incidence
- Late stage female breast cancer incidence
- Female breast cancer deaths
- Late stage prostate cancer incidence



- Tobacco-related cancer incidence, excluding lung cancer
- Tobacco-related cancer deaths, excluding lung cancer
- Adults ages 50 years and older who have ever had a sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy
- Women ages 18 and older who have had a Pap smear within the past three years
- Women ages 50 and older who have had a mammogram in the past two years

Additional measures related to risk factors for cancer can be found in several sections of the State Health Assessment, including Tobacco Use, Physical Activity, Nutrition and Weight, and Environmental Health.

Cancer incidence, mortality, and screening measures included in the State Health Assessment vary across population groups in Maine. For example, males are at higher risk than females both of being diagnosed with and of dying from colorectal, lung, and tobacco-related cancers, as well as cancer in general. People who are White are more likely than people of color to be diagnosed with cancer (all types combined). The age-adjusted all-cancer incidence rate is significantly higher in the Downeast and Penquis Public Health

Districts than in most of the other Districts in the state. Mainers with less education or income are less likely to have cancer screenings such as mammograms, Pap tests, and sigmoidoscopy or colonoscopy than Mainers with higher education or income.³

The Chronic Disease section of Healthy Maine 2020 includes objectives to reduce the incidence rate of late-stage female breast cancer and to reduce the incidence rate of late-stage colorectal cancer. Objectives related to risk factors for cancer can be found in other sections of Healthy Maine 2020, including Substance Abuse, Physical Activity and Nutrition, and Environmental Health.⁵

¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Healthy People 2020. Cancer: overview. Available from: <http://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topicsobjectives2020/overview.aspx?topicid=5> (accessed 3/19/2013).

² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. Cancer prevention and control. Available from: <http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dcpc/prevention/> (accessed 3/19/2013).

³ Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. State Health Assessment – 2012. Available from: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/phdata/sha/index.shtml> (accessed 3/19/2013).

⁴ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control. Web-based injury statistics query and reporting system (WISQARS): leading causes of death. Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/injury/wisqars/leading-causes_death.html (accessed 3/19/2013).

⁵ Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Healthy Maine 2020. Available from: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/healthy-maine/index.shtml>.