

Major U.S. Cancer Centers and Organizations Endorse Goal of Resuming Cancer Screening and Treatment during the COVID-19 Pandemic

The number of people newly diagnosed with cancer has decreased significantly in the United States (U.S.) as well as in other countries across the globe during the COVID-19 pandemic.^{1,2} There is no evidence that the rate of new occurrences of cancer is also decreasing. These distressing trends tell us that many cancers are going undiagnosed and untreated in the wake of COVID-19. As leading cancer centers and organizations, we urge people across the country to talk with their health care provider to resume regular primary care check-ups, recommended cancer screening, and evidence-based cancer treatment to lessen the negative impact the pandemic is having on identifying and treating people with cancer.

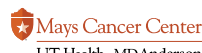
Recent studies found the number of cervical, colorectal, breast, prostate and lung cancer screening tests dropped dramatically due to concerns about COVID-19.^{3,4} Studies have also noted a significant drop in cancer diagnoses and delays in active treatment.^{1,5} This is concerning because identifying and treating cancer early significantly improves outcomes from cancer, a disease in which it's estimated more than 600,000 people died from in the U.S. in 2020.⁶ The National Cancer Institute (NCI) conservatively predicted almost 10,000 excess deaths in the U.S. from breast and colorectal cancer alone over the next 10 years because of pandemic-related delays in cancer screening and treatment.⁷ However, this estimate does not account for other cancer types and assumed only a 6-month disruption in care, suggesting the actual excess deaths could be much higher.

Cancer screening and treatment saves lives.

Hospitals and medical systems across the country have implemented numerous infection control measures to provide a safe environment for people to receive important medical care during the pandemic. Together, we have an opportunity to help reverse the course and reduce the negative impact the pandemic has on people with cancer. As national leaders in cancer care, we call on all people, community leaders, and other healthcare professionals to act now. We strongly recommend everyone:

- Ensure people in our communities are not delaying care for important medical issues.
- Encourage people in our communities to resume recommended cancer screening.
- Facilitate and encourage people with cancer to resume evidence-based treatment.
- Contact your doctor right away if any concerning medical symptoms arise.
- Resume all preventive and prescribed care, including regular cancer screening, as recommended by your doctor.

Advances in cancer screening and treatment have resulted in a significant decline in the annual death rate from cancer.⁸ We must not lose our momentum now. Please join us and help people across America reengage in cancer screening and care—their lives may depend upon it.



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