

CANCER WON'T WAIT AND NEITHER SHOULD YOU

FACT SHEET: Resume Cancer Screening and Treatment

How the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted recommended cancer screening and cancer care:

- In the United States, studies have found more than **one third** of adults failed to receive recommended cancer screening during the pandemic.
- **43%** of patients have missed routine preventive appointments due to COVID-19 fears.¹
- **35%** of American Adults had a cancer screening scheduled during the pandemic and missed it.²
- An estimated **22 million** cancer screenings were cancelled or missed between March and June of 2020.³
- One study found, at the initial peak of the pandemic in April, screenings for breast, colon, prostate, and lung cancers were lower by **85%, 75%, 74%, and 56%**, respectively.⁴
- Another study determined the number of cervical, colon and breast cancer screening tests dropped by **more than 80%** in spring of 2020 due to concerns about COVID-19.⁵
- Another study found diagnoses for six major cancer types dropped by nearly **50%**.⁶
- Regulations for travel and indoor businesses can vary by state and timing. These changes and the resulting confusion have factored into a **70–80%** reduction in the number of patient visits to doctor offices, including a **76%** decline in patients presenting with asymptomatic conditions.⁷
- An estimated **12 million** individuals have lost their employer sponsored health insurance coverage with disproportionate impact on Black and Hispanic people.⁸

Why this matters:

- **Screening saves lives.**
- More than **600,000** people died from cancer in the US in 2020, according to the latest estimates from ACS.⁹
- The earlier the cancer is detected, the more options there are for treatment, and the better the chances for **survival**.
- The National Cancer Institute (NCI) states that almost **10,000** excess deaths in the US from breast and colorectal cancer alone over the next 10 years will be because of pandemic-related delays in cancer screening and treatment.¹⁰ 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.

¹ Prevent Cancer Foundation. (2020, August). "Back on the Books"- A Lifesaving Initiative in the Face of COVID-19. <https://www.preventcancer.org/2020/08/prevent-cancer-foundation-announces-back-on-the-books-a-lifesaving-initiative-in-the-face-of-covid-19/>

² Prevent Cancer Foundation. (2020, August). "Back on the Books"- A Lifesaving Initiative in the Face of COVID-19. <https://www.preventcancer.org/2020/08/prevent-cancer-foundation-announces-back-on-the-books-a-lifesaving-initiative-in-the-face-of-covid-19/>

³ Three Months of COVID-19 May Mean 80,000 Missed Cancer Diagnoses. (2020, May). MedScape. <https://www.medscape.com/viewarticle/929986>

⁴ Patt D, Gordan L, Diaz M, et al. The Impact of COVID-19 on Cancer Care: How the pandemic is delaying cancer diagnosis and treatment for American seniors. *JCO Clin Cancer Inform* Published online October 21, 2020. Accessed October 22, 2020. doi:10.1200/CCI.20.00134

⁵ The Pandemic Is Delaying Cancer Screenings and Detection The missed checkups could result in later, more severe diagnoses down the line. (2020). *Scientific American*, 1–3. <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/the-pandemic-is-delaying-cancer-screenings-and-detection/>

⁶ Kaufman HW, Chen Z, Niles J, Fesko Y. Changes in the Number of US Patients With Newly Identified Cancer Before and During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(8):e2017267. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.17267

⁷ Aitken, M., & Kleinrock, M. (n.d.). Shifts in Healthcare Demand, Delivery, and Care During the COVID-19 Era.

⁸ Sonfield, A., Frost, J., Dawson, R., & Lindberg, L. (2020, August 3). Covid-19 Job Losses Threaten Insurance Coverage and Access to Reproductive Health Care for Millions. Retrieved 2020, from <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/10.1377/hblog20200728.779022/full/>

⁹ <https://www.cancer.org/research/cancer-facts-statistics/all-cancer-facts-figures/cancer-facts-figures-2020.html>

¹⁰ Sharpless, N. (2020, June 19). Covid-19 and Cancer. Retrieved 2020, from <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/368/6497/1290.abstract>



- Pandemic-related disruptions will likely **exacerbate existing disparities** in cancer screening and survival across groups of people who have systemically experienced social or economic obstacles to screening and cancer care.

What we should do about it:

- **Prioritize** cancer screening, as long as it is safe to do so
- Provide the public with **safe options** for cancer prevention and early detection.
- Focus efforts on promoting screening and **overcoming barriers** for vulnerable populations.
- Communicate COVID-19 risks to the public in a **transparent and trustworthy** manner.
- Encourage lawmakers and regulators to implement the urgent **process and policy changes** that will sustain access to primary care and facilitate the safe return to pre-pandemic screening rates.

Resources:

- [NCCN.org/resume-screening](https://www.nccn.org/resume-screening)
- [NCCN.org/covid-19](https://www.nccn.org/covid-19)
- acs4ccc.org/ReengageLetter