

Colon cancer deaths down except in Mississippi

July 6 2011, By MIKE STOBBE , AP Medical Writer

Colon cancer deaths continue to drop across America - except in Mississippi, health officials said Tuesday.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) issued a report that echoes earlier findings of a national decline in [colon cancer](#) deaths. Rates fell by as much as 5 and 6 percent in a few states - Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island.

Mississippi was the only state that saw no real decline, according to the CDC report.

"The big picture is screenings are up, [death rates](#) are down, and even more progress is possible," said the CDC's director, Dr. Thomas Frieden.

From 2003 to 2007, the colon and rectal cancer death rate in the U.S. fell from 19 to 17 per 100,000 people. That represents nearly 32,000 fewer deaths, the CDC found.

Kentucky and West Virginia had the highest rates in 2007, tied at nearly 21 deaths per 100,000 people. Mississippi and Delaware were next, just over 20.

But Kentucky, West Virginia and Delaware all saw drops of around 2 to 3 percent. Mississippi's didn't budge to a statistically significant degree.

[CDC officials](#) said Mississippi's lack of progress may be related to a

number of factors.

Colon cancer deaths can be reduced through screening and early diagnosis. Nearly two-thirds of people ages 50 to 75 getting recommended testing. But Mississippi had one of the nation's lowest [screening rates](#), at about 58 percent.

Adequate follow-up treatment is also important, as are diet and exercise. Problems in those areas may also plague Mississippi, officials said.

Also, previous research shows that blacks die of colon cancer at higher rates than other [racial groups](#). Blacks account for 37 percent of Mississippi's residents, compared to 13 percent of the nation's population.

The study was based on national telephone interviews and databases.

Colon cancer is the leading cancer cause of death in non-smokers. About 49,000 Americans will die of colon cancer this year, the [American Cancer Society](#) estimates. Death rates have been going down for both men and women since the 1980s.

In a call with reporters on Tuesday, the 50-year-old CDC director said he recently had his second colonoscopy and four polyps removed that could have become cancerous.

"If you find out early enough, you can prevent cancer," Frieden said.

More information: CDC report: <http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns>

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