

Number of cancer cases in Canada will increase in 2020 as population ages

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As Canada's population grows and ages, the cancer burden will remain high and even increase in 2020, according to a study on projected cancer rates published in *CMAJ* (*Canadian Medical Association Journal*).

Nearly 1 in 2 Canadians are expected to receive a diagnosis of cancer in their lifetime, and cancer is the leading cause of death in the country. With an aging population, deaths from cancer and the numbers of new cases are increasing, as are cancer-related costs. For example, cancer care costs rose from Can\$2.9 billion in 2005 to Can\$7.5 billion in 2012.

"The overall burden of cancer remains high in Canada and, owing to the growing and [aging population](#), the number of cases and deaths will likely continue to increase," writes Dr. Leah Smith, Canadian Cancer Society, St. John's, Newfoundland, with coauthors.

The researchers estimate there will be 225 800 new diagnoses of cancer in 2020 in Canada—with cases of lung cancer (29 800), breast cancer (27 700), [colorectal cancer](#) (26 900) and prostate cancer (23 300) accounting for almost half (48%) of new cancer diagnoses.

Highlights:

- Lung cancer will be the leading cause of death, responsible for about 1 in 4 of the estimated 83 300 deaths from cancer expected in 2020.
- The number of new cancer cases is expected to be about 5% higher in men than in women.
- More men than women are expected to die from all forms of cancer except for breast and thyroid.
- In men, [prostate cancer](#) will be the most commonly diagnosed cancer, accounting for about 1 in every 5 diagnoses.
- Breast cancer is expected to be the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women, accounting for about 1 in 4 new cases.
- Deaths from breast cancer have decreased by nearly half since the mid-1980s, largely owing to improved treatment.
- Colorectal cancer deaths are also declining, which may be partly because of decreasing tobacco use and improvements in

detection and treatment. Between 2007 and 2016, the Yukon territory and all provinces except Quebec introduced organized screening programs.

- While the death rates for lung, breast, prostate and colorectal cancers have declined, deaths from pancreatic cancer have remained stable; this means [pancreatic cancer](#) is expected to surpass [breast cancer](#) as the third leading cause of cancer death in Canada.

"Although estimates for the number of cancer diagnoses and deaths in 2020 are higher than in 2019, the declining rates indicate progress is being made," says Dr. Smith. "This is largely due to [prevention programs](#) like smoking cessation and improvements in screening and early detection practices."

"Additional efforts to improve uptake of existing programs, as well as to advance research, prevention, screening and treatment, are needed," the authors conclude.

More information: *Canadian Medical Association Journal* (2020).
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