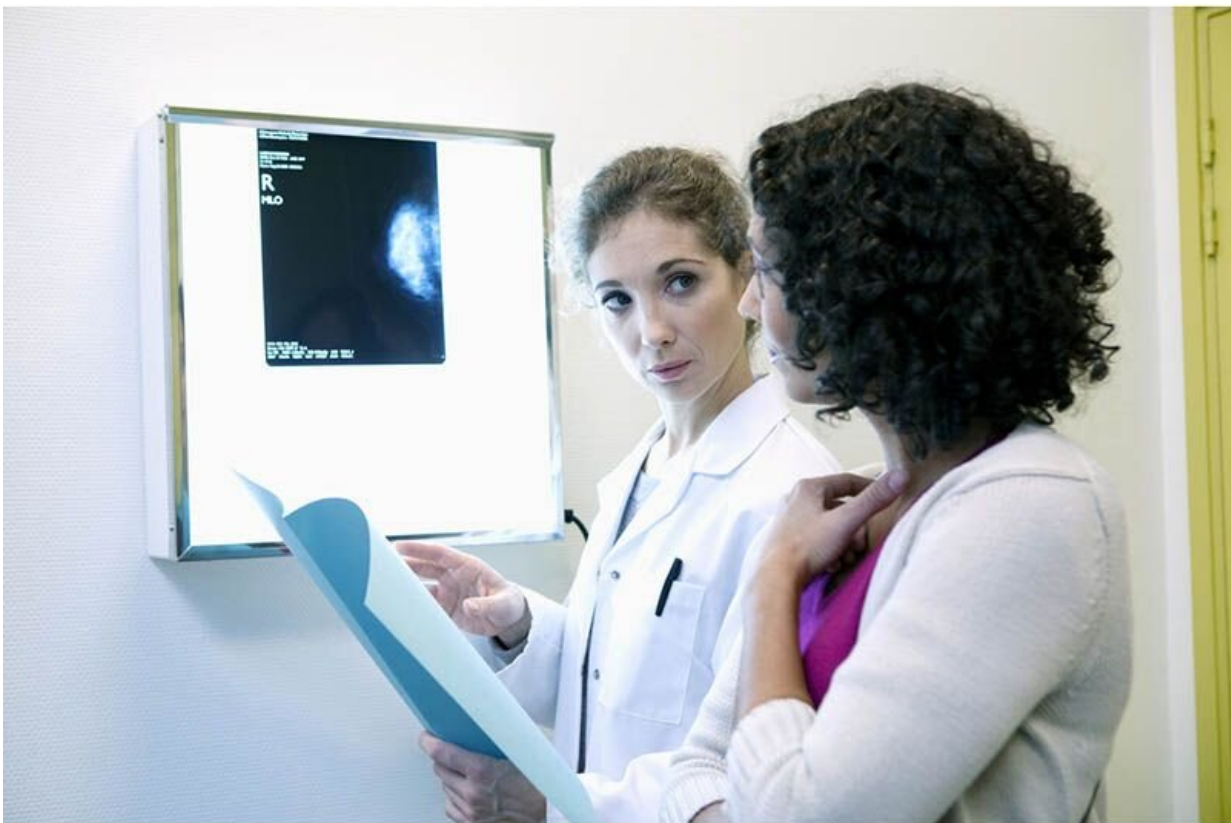


Americans missed almost 10 million cancer screenings during pandemic

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Nearly 10 million cancer screenings have been missed in the United

States during the coronavirus pandemic, researchers report.

The investigators analyzed data on three types of cancer for which early screenings are most beneficial—breast, colon and prostate—and found that 9.4 million screenings for these cancers did not occur in the United States due to COVID-19.

Screenings for all three types of cancer fell sharply. For example, there was a 90% decline in breast cancer screenings in April 2020, according to the study published online April 29 in *JAMA Oncology*.

"As a physician, I wasn't surprised to see that screenings had declined, but this study measures by how much," said study author Dr. Ronald Chen, associate director of health equity at the University of Kansas Cancer Center. "This study makes it clear that this is a large [public health](#) issue."

Routine [screening](#) helps detect cancer at an early stage when it is most curable. Millions of people missing cancer screenings because of the COVID-19 pandemic will mean the delay in the detection of cancer for some, meaning it will be more advanced when it's diagnosed.

"Unfortunately, by causing cancelations of appointments and cancer screenings, COVID will indirectly cause an increase in cancer deaths—another negative consequence of COVID that has not yet received much [public attention](#)," Chen said in a university news release.

It's crucial for the public and [health care providers](#) to understand the urgency of getting cancer screenings back on track, he emphasized.

"There needs to be a concerted public health educational campaign across the country to reinforce the importance of [cancer screening](#)," Chen said. "Hospitals across the country also need to devote effort to

contact patients to reschedule canceled screening tests, in order to minimize the delay in screening and cancer diagnoses from the missed tests."

The study also found that telehealth visits, which were widely used for the first time during the pandemic, were associated with better screening rates.

"Telehealth has a measurable positive effect on whether patients get their [cancer](#) screenings," Chen said. "This study also justifies a continued use of telehealth even after the pandemic."

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