



Canadian
Cancer
Society

Nearly 1 in 2 Canadians expected to get cancer: report

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TORONTO -

Nearly 1 in 2 Canadians is expected to be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, according to a new report – Canadian Cancer Statistics 2017 – released today by the Canadian Cancer Society (CCS) in partnership with the Public Health Agency of Canada and Statistics Canada.

For males, the lifetime risk is 49% and for females it is 45%. This puts an enormous burden on individuals, the healthcare system and services and research supported by cancer charities. CCS is calling on the public to invest in cancer research and prevention efforts to reduce the impact of cancer on Canadians.

“This sobering statistic highlights the fact that cancer is a disease that will touch almost all of us in some way,” says Dr Leah Smith, CCS epidemiologist and one of the report’s authors. “Almost half of us will be diagnosed with at least one form of cancer at some point during our lifetime. In addition, 1 in 4 Canadians will die of cancer. That might be your spouse, your parent, your child or you. The good news is we can do something about it. About half of all cancers can be prevented and research continues to improve the outlook for people with cancer.”

Understanding the risk

CCS emphasizes that the rise in cancer cases is primarily being driven by an aging and growing population. According to today’s report, an estimated 206,200 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer this year, and almost 90% of these cases will be among Canadians 50 years of age and older. As more people live into old age, the number of cancer cases will continue to rise.

One family’s story

Sarah Metcalfe, 58, has been touched by cancer far too many times. With 8 family members having received cancer diagnoses, including aunts, uncles, both parents and her husband, Sarah was still stunned in 2011 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

“For our family, all our cancers have been unrelated, not hereditary,” says Sarah. “But the good news is that I’m seeing so much progress against the disease.”



Progress and challenges

Great progress has been made in the fight against cancer, but there is much more work to be done.

- Because of investments in cancer control including prevention, early detection and treatment, the overall cancer survival rate has increased from about 25% in the 1940s to 60% today.
- Some cancers, like thyroid and testicular, have a 5-year net survival of over 90%.
- For other cancers, such as pancreatic, there is an urgent need for more research investment. Pancreatic cancer has the lowest survival rate of all the major cancers at only 8%. Very little progress has been made against this cancer, especially compared to other major cancers. As a result, it is expected to soon be the third leading cause of cancer death in Canada. (Today's report includes an in-depth chapter with new information on pancreatic cancer).
- Thanks to the charitable contributions of our donors, CCS invested \$40 million in cancer research in 2016.
- The Government of Canada invests in cancer control in many ways, including funding the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.

"Every single Canadian is affected by cancer in some way, and we need to ensure we support patients and families with better research, education, treatment and support," said the Honourable Jane Philpott, Minister of Health. "We are committed to working with our partners, including the Canadian Cancer Society, to continue to help people with cancer to live longer and have a better quality of life."

Taking action

Canadians have the power to reduce their cancer risk. "This report underscores how important it is to focus on healthy behaviours and healthy public policies to reduce the number of people hearing the words 'you have cancer' each year," says Smith. "Actions like quitting smoking, eating well, being physically active and practising sun safety, along with appropriate cancer screening tests, can go a long way to reducing your risk of getting cancer."



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Research is also a critical piece of the puzzle. Investments in cancer research will lead to better prevention, enhanced screening, earlier diagnosis, more targeted and effective treatments, improved quality of life and, ultimately, fewer cancer cases and deaths.

“Thanks in part to our donors, CCS is able to invest in the most promising research in Canada,” says Smith. “But the reality is last year, 60% of high-priority research projects went unfunded because of the money we had available. Imagine the impact we could have if we were able to fund 100%.”

About Canadian Cancer Statistics

Canadian Cancer Statistics 2017 was prepared through a partnership of the Canadian Cancer Society, the Public Health Agency of Canada, Statistics Canada and provincial and territorial cancer registries. For three decades, this publication has been helping to prioritize cancer support and services, inform health research priorities and assess the impact of prevention, early detection and treatment efforts.

About the Canadian Cancer Society

The Canadian Cancer Society is a national, community-based organization of volunteers whose mission is to eradicate cancer and enhance the quality of life of people living with cancer. Thanks to our donors and volunteers, CCS has the most impact, against the most cancers, in the most communities in Canada. Building on our progress, we are working with Canadians to change cancer forever. For more information, visit cancer.ca or call our toll-free bilingual Cancer Information Service at 1-888-939-3333 (TTY 1-866-786-3934).