

CANCER IN YUKON



Key findings from the Yukon Cancer Incidence Report, 2009-2016

All cancer incidence

- 81 new cancer cases annually among Yukon males.
- 72 new cancer cases annually among Yukon females.
- Yukon's cancer incidence rates have decreased and are at similar levels as Canadian rates.
- As Yukon's population ages and grows, the number of people diagnosed with cancer is expected to increase.



Notable trends among the most common cancers

- Breast cancer was the most common cancer followed by lung, colorectal and prostate cancers.
- Early detection of cancer leads to better outcomes and more treatment options for patients.



Breast cancer

- Yukon's female breast cancer rates are significantly elevated compared to the rest of Canada.
- Almost three-quarters of female breast cancers are diagnosed at an early stage, with an early detection rate similar to Canada as a whole.



Lung cancer

- Lung cancer rates have declined for both males and females and are at similar levels to national rates. In Yukon, half of lung cancers are detected at Stage IV, similar to national rates.
- Smoking remains the most important risk factor for lung cancer and nearly a quarter of Yukoners self-report as daily/occasional smokers.



Colorectal cancer

- Approximately half of Yukon Colorectal cancers were diagnosed at an early stage, similar to national estimates.
- Increased participation in the ColonCheck screening program should help shift diagnosis to early stages of disease.



Prostate cancer

- Prostate cancer rates have steadily declined for both Yukon and the rest of Canada.
- Yukon's prostate cancer rates were lower for stage I and stage II and elevated for stage IV compared to Canadian rates. It is unclear if this related to prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing.



Cancer incidence - Whitehorse and Yukon communities

- After adjusting for size and age of the population, the incidence rate among the non-Whitehorse population appeared slightly greater than the Whitehorse population.



Cancer survival

- Survival for female Yukoners was no different than Canadian females.
- For Yukon males, survival for all-cancers combined and prostate cancer was worse compared to Canadian males
- Cancer survival is influenced by a number of factors, including access to timely and appropriate care, and early detection of cancer.

OVERVIEW of recommendations from Yukon's Chief Medical Officer of Health

Yukon Cancer Incidence Report, 2009-2016

Cancer's impact goes beyond the physical to draw upon emotional, social, economic and spiritual health. It affects individuals, care providers, family members and the community around them, and is a considerable challenge to the health system.

The Yukon Cancer Incidence Report, 2009-2016 found that while the rate of new cancers among Yukoners is decreasing, we are also seeing growth and aging of the Yukon population. In Canada, approximately 2 in 5 Canadians are diagnosed with cancer. Even with declining incidence rates, we can expect to see more people diagnosed with cancer and an increasing demand on health and social services in the territory.

The following recommendations build upon work that is already underway at the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Department of Health and Social Services. In making these recommendations, we acknowledge that there are multiples factors that influence the risk of cancer, from biological to environmental factors, to the social circumstances we live in. Further, half of cancers can be prevented, and early detection is a proven strategy to reduce cancer mortality and improve survival.

Briefly, our recommendations are:

1. Establish a Yukon Cancer Steering Committee to oversee a coordinated approach to cancer prevention and control involving the Government of Yukon and Yukon First Nations.
2. Partner with Yukon First Nations governments and communities for meaningful reporting of cancer data.
3. Report on key indicators of cancer care to inform and improve cancer care pathways in Yukon.
4. Build on existing initiatives that target modifiable risk factors, the social determinants of health and climate change to help prevent cancer.
5. Develop a centralized cancer screening hub to facilitate and evaluate organized cancer screening programs that improve early detection, reduce cancer mortality and improve survival.

