

Native Hawaiian Cancer Fact Sheet

Provided by *Imi Hale* - Native Hawaiian Cancer Network, a program of *Papa Ola Lōkahi*.

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Q: What is cancer?

A: Cancer is a disease that begins if new cells, the body's basic building material, grow when the body does not need them to, or when old cells do not die when they should. These "extra" cells build up and form a lump called a tumor. A tumor can grow if it is not treated. There are two types of tumors. One causes cancer (malignant tumor) and the other does not (benign tumor).

Q: Why are some groups at higher risk for getting cancer?

A: Cancer continues to increase among Native Hawaiian (NH), American Indian, and Alaska Native populations in the U.S. and Canada. Cancer is usually a disease of people over the age of 40, and a person's risk for cancer increases as he or she grows older. Most cancers in Hawai'i (75% of the 5,000 new cases of cancer each year) occur in people aged 55 years and older. Cancer can be caused by a variety of external, internal, and lifestyle factors. Be aware that many types of cancers do not have noticeable symptoms. This is one reason why it is very important to take part in regular cancer screenings. People are at greatest risk for developing cancer if they smoke, drink an average of 2 or more alcoholic drinks daily, do not get daily physical activity, or eat a lot of fast food or high fat foods.

Q: How serious is cancer in the NH population?

A: Cancer is the first leading cause of death for Hawaiian women, and the second leading cause of death for Hawaiian men.

Q: What types of cancers do Hawaiians get most often?

A: The most common types of cancer for Hawaiian men are cancers of the lung, colon and rectum, and prostate. The most common cancers among Hawaiian women are cancers of the lung, breast, and colon and rectum. Nearly 90% of all lung cancer deaths can be linked to tobacco use, and about 1 in 5 Hawaiians smoke tobacco everyday, the highest percentage among the five major ethnic groups in Hawai'i.

Q: How can cancer be prevented?

A: People can lower their chances of getting cancer by choosing foods with less fat, eating more vegetables, fruits and whole grains, and not smoking or chewing tobacco. Regular exercise, weight control, and a healthy lifestyle can help prevent cancer. People can also protect themselves by getting regular checkups and screenings to find cancer early, when it is most curable. This is especially important for people with a family history of cancer.

SELECT FACTS FROM THE 2003-2004 HAWAII CANCER FACTS & FIGURES BOOK

- Each year, more than 75% of all the new cases of cancer in Hawai'i is among those who are 55 years and older.
- Over 90% of prostate cancers occur in men age 55+ years. It is the 3rd leading cause of cancer deaths among Hawaiian men.
- Native Hawaiian women have the highest incidence of cervical cancer of Hawai'i's five major ethnic groups.
- Hawaiian women have the highest incidence and mortality rates for breast cancer in Hawai'i, among the five major ethnic groups.
- Hawaiians have the highest mortality rates for colon and rectum cancer in the state, yet over 6 in 10 Hawaiian adults have never had a colorectal cancer screening.
- Each year there are about 45 lung and bronchus cancer cases among Hawaiian women and 34 deaths. Similarly, about 64 cases are reported for Hawaiian men and 49 deaths every year.
- Lung and bronchus cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among Hawaiian men. At 21%, they have the highest incidence rates for lung and bronchus cancer.

Q: How is cancer treated?

A: There are treatment options for different cancers including: **surgery** to remove the cancer, **radiation therapy** to burn the cancer cells, and **chemotherapy** to poison the cancer cells with drugs. Other methods include drug therapy that stops the production of hormones (that can promote cancer), or the removal of organs that produce hormones, microbiology (angiogenesis) to block continued growth of cancer cells, biological therapy which stimulates the immune system to help patients resist the side effects of cancer treatment, and other types of therapy.

Q: Is cancer a death sentence?

A: NO. Cancer treatments are getting better and better and many Hawaiians who get treatment while the cancer is in early stages of growth may have a normal life span. Cancer is gradually becoming more of a “chronic” disease, like diabetes, rather than a cause of death.

Q: Where can I get more general facts about cancer?

A: There are several websites if you have access to the internet:

- American Cancer Society (ACS): www.cancer.org
- Cancer Information Service of Hawai'i: www.crch.org/cis
- Hawai'i Department of Health: www.state.hi.us/doh/
- Intercultural Cancer Council: www.iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts/
- National Cancer Institute: www.cancer.gov
- The Smoking Quitline, Nat'l Cancer Institute: www.smokefree.gov

Q: Where can I get support if I am a cancer patient or a care provider for a cancer patient?

A: A listing of some Hawai'i cancer support groups.

- American Cancer Society (ACS): 1-800-ACS-2345 (1-800-227-2345)
 - Here We Go Again (Metastatic and Recurrent Breast Cancer Support Group). O'ahu 637-3388, 689-4036, or 946-9473.
 - Us Too Prostate Cancer. Kailua 261-4346 or Pearl City 484-1529.
 - Make Today Count. Honolulu 595-7544, Leeward 486-8420, Windward 262-5124
 - Reach to Recovery (Breast Cancer). 2370 Nuuanu Avenue, Every 1st Saturday
- Castle Medical Center (www.castlemed.org)
 - General Cancer Support Group. Kailua Wellness Center 263-5400
- Kapiolani Medical Center (www.kapiolani.org)
 - Ovarian Cancer Support Group. Honolulu Women's Center 535-7000
 - Healthy Living with Breast Cancer. Honolulu Women's Center 973-3189
 - Hui Malama Kako'o (Caring Support Group). Pearl City Pali Momi 485-4548
- Native Hawaiian Health Care Systems
 - Na Pu'uwai Cancer Support Group. Kaunakakai, Molokai 560-3653
- Queens Medical Center (www.queens.org)
 - Breast Cancer Support Group. Honolulu 547-4660
- Straub Clinic & Hospital (www.straubhealth.com):
 - Prostate Cancer Support Group. Honolulu 522-4325
- Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center (www.wcchc.com)
 - Cancer Support Group. Wai'anae 696-1599



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Authors: Jordan K. Lee, LorrieAnn Santos, and JoAnn U. Tsark are with *Imi Hale*, the Native Hawaiian Cancer Network in Honolulu, Hawai'i, a Special Populations Network funded by the National Cancer Institute through the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities, under the direction of Dr. Harold Freeman.

The views expressed in this fact sheet are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent *Imi Hale*, the Native Hawaiian Cancer Network, *Papa Ola Lōkahi*, the National Cancer Institute or the Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities.



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Imi Hale

Native Hawaiian Cancer Network
A Program of *Papa Ola Lōkahi*
894 Queen Street
Honolulu, HI 96813
Phone: 808-597-6558
Fax: 808-597-6552
Web: www.imihale.org