

Health Brief: Cancer in Tennessee

HEALTH BRIEF

STATE of the STATE

CANCER

Cancer is the 2nd leading cause of death in the U.S. after heart disease.

Tennessee has the 7th highest cancer death rate in the U.S. with an estimated 14,560 deaths due to cancer in 2017.

Lung cancer is the most common cause of cancer death in Tennessee, where 22% of the adult population smokes.

An estimated 40% of cancers diagnosed in the U.S. are [related to obesity](#), affecting more than 630,000 Americans.

What is cancer?

The body is made up of trillions of cells that grow and divide and eventually are replaced with new cells.

Cancer occurs in any part of the body where abnormal cells begin to grow.

Often these new abnormal cells form tumors, or solid masses of tissue that can interfere with the way the body functions.

There are two types of tumors:

1. **Benign tumors** are contained.

They do not spread into other tissues, and they can usually be removed without a threat of regrowth. Benign brain tumors can be life-threatening, but most benign tumors are not.

2. **Malignant tumors** are cancerous.

They invade other tissues, and as they grow, they may break apart, move through the bloodstream into other parts of the body and grow there. This is called metastasis.

Some forms of cancer, such as leukemia, are cancers of blood-forming cells and do not cause tumors.

What causes cancer?

There are more than 100 types of cancer. Some are genetic, though most are not. A small number are related to viruses or infections, such as human papilloma virus (HPV) and HIV.

Common causes of cancer in the U.S are:

- **Smoking and tobacco**

80% of lung cancers are attributed to smoking

- **Diet and physical activity**

40% of all diagnosed cancers in the U.S. are related to obesity (liver, colorectal, gallbladder, breast, endometrial, pancreatic, etc.)

- **Excess alcohol consumption**

3.5% of cancer deaths in the U.S. may be alcohol related (liver, head and neck, esophageal, breast, colorectal)

- **Sun exposure**

The majority of melanoma cases, a life-threatening form of skin cancer, are caused by the sun's UV rays

How prevalent is cancer in Tennessee?

Tennessee ranks #7 in cancer deaths in the U.S.

Tennessee has a 13% higher death rate from cancer than the U.S. average.

More than 37,600 new cases of cancer were diagnosed in Tennessee in 2016.

All cancer

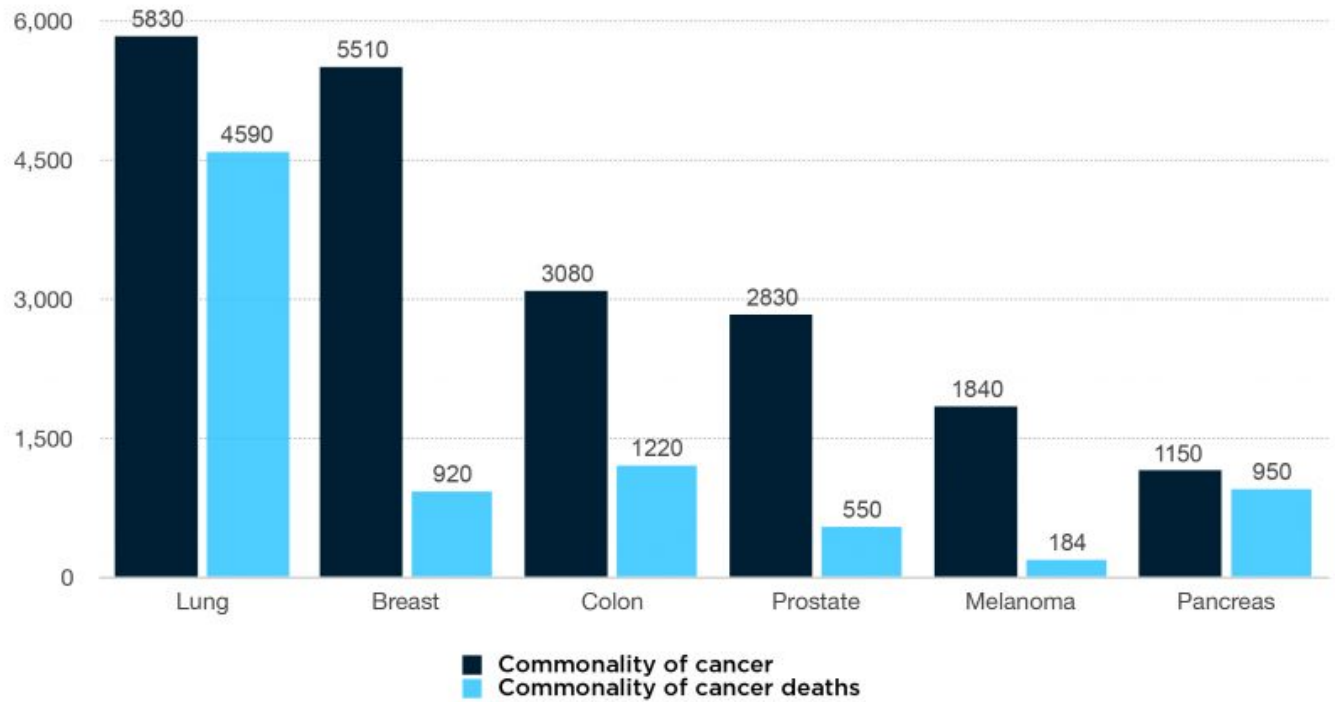
5 most common cancers in Tennessee

1. Lung
2. Breast
3. Colon/Rectum
4. Prostate
5. Melanoma

5 most common cancer deaths in Tennessee

1. Lung
2. Colon/Rectum
3. Pancreas
4. Breast
5. Liver

Common Cancers vs. Common Cancer Deaths in Tennessee



Women

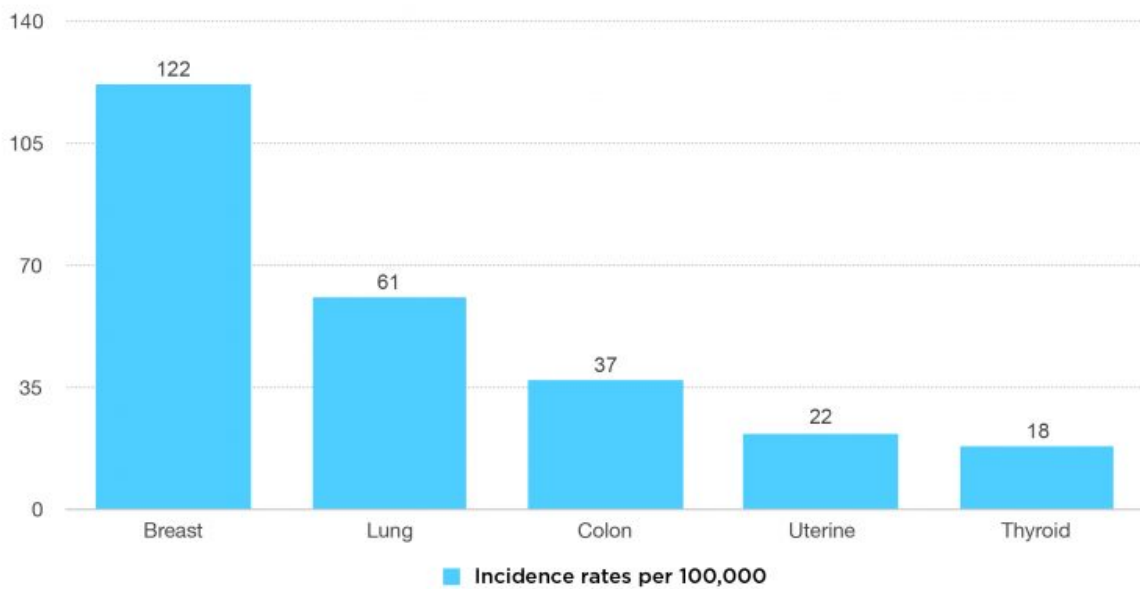
Most common cancers for Tennessee women

- Breast
- Lung
- Colorectal
- Uterine
- Thyroid

Most common cancer deaths for Tennessee women

- Lung
- Breast
- Colorectal
- Pancreas
- Ovarian

Most Common Cancers for Tennessee Women



Men

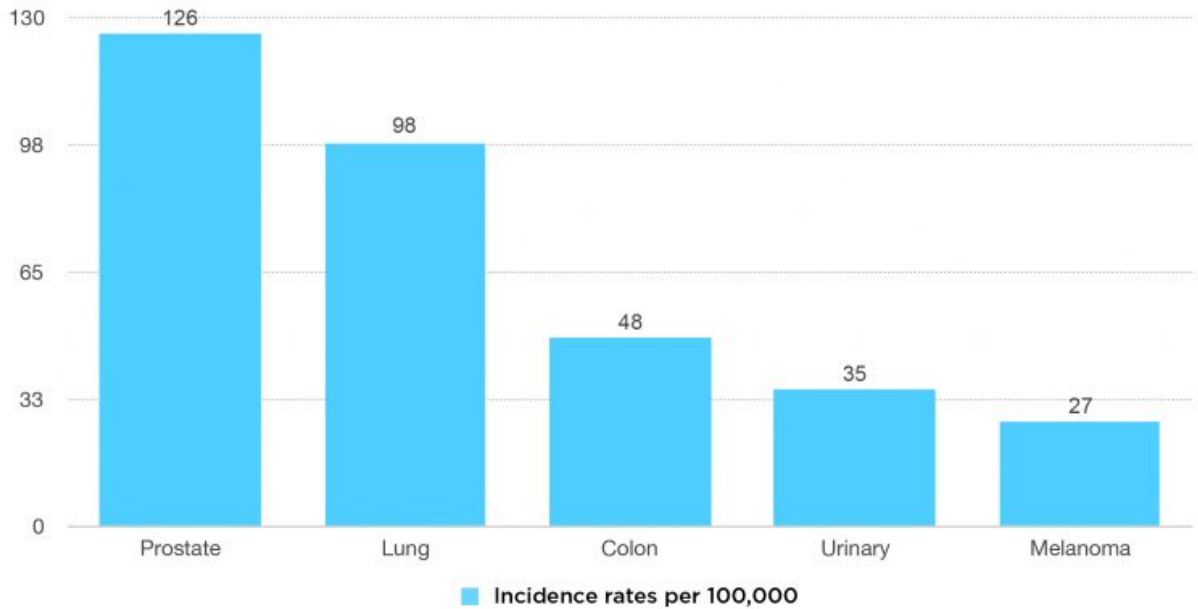
Most common cancers for Tennessee men

- Prostate
- Lung
- Colorectal
- Bladder
- Melanoma

Most common cancer deaths for Tennessee men

- Lung
- Colorectal
- Prostate
- Pancreas
- Leukemia

Most Common Cancers for Tennessee Men



What are the most commonly diagnosed cancers in Tennessee?

Lung cancer

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death among men and women in Tennessee.

4,200 people a year die from lung cancer in Tennessee.

The incidence of lung cancer in Tennessee is 50-100% higher than the national rate, depending on region.

For example:

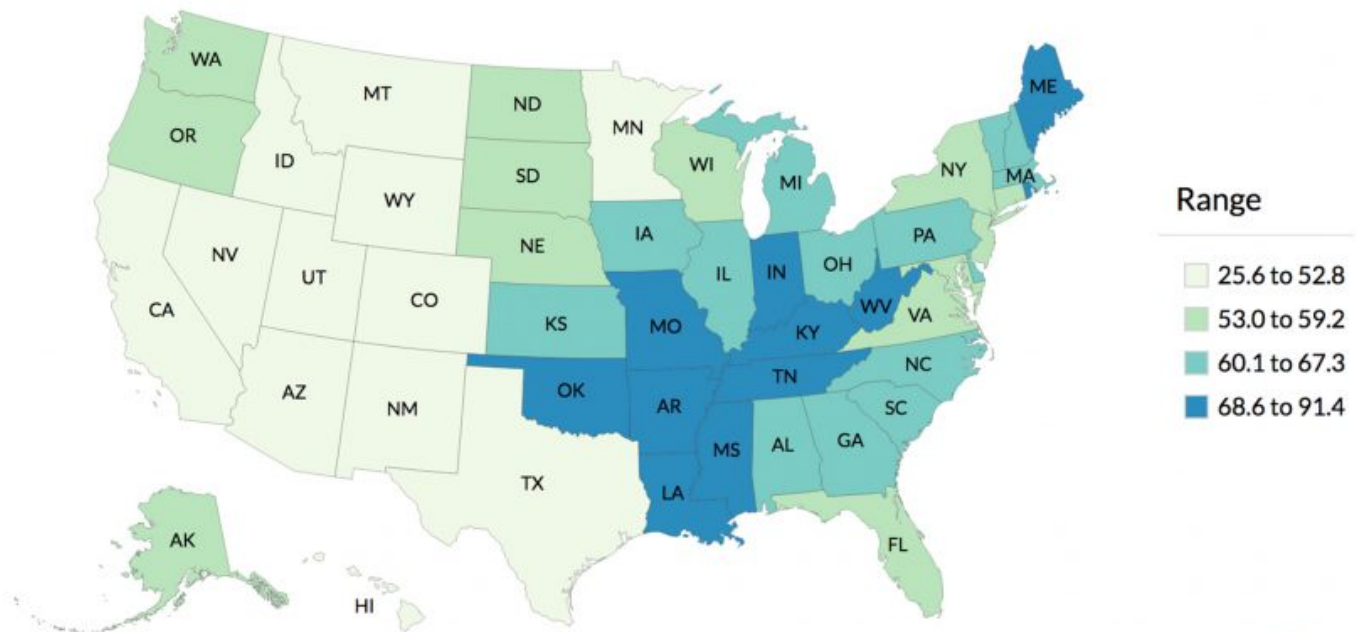
- Hamilton County's rate is 60 lung cancer deaths per 100,000 people
- Polk County is 106, and
- Williamson County is 41.

Smoking is a factor in 33% of cancer deaths in Tennessee.

11.5% of Tennessee high schoolers smoke cigarettes. Only 8% do nationally.

22% of Tennessee adults smoke. Only 15% do nationally.

Lung and Bronchus Cancer: Incidence Rates by State 2014



Colorectal cancer

Colorectal cancer develops from polyps, abnormal growths in the colon and rectum. Left untreated, some polyps [may become cancerous](#).

Colorectal cancer risk increases with age — [90% of colorectal cancer cases occur in people who are 50 years or older](#). [🐦](#)

Tennessee has the 26th highest incidence rate for colorectal cancer nationally but the 11th highest death rate.

1,220 Tennesseans died from colorectal cancer in 2017.

Risk factors for colorectal cancer include:

- Family history of colorectal cancer or colorectal polyps
- Obesity
- Low fiber, high-fat diet

The [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force](#) recommends that men and women get screened for colorectal cancer starting at 50.

Breast cancer

Breast cancer can affect both men and women, but it is far more common in women. There are approximately 100 times more new cases of breast cancer diagnosed in women than in men each year.

5,510 new cases of breast cancer were diagnosed in Tennessee in 2017.

[920 women in Tennessee died from breast cancer in 2017.](#)

Black women in Tennessee have the 9th highest rate of death from breast cancer in the U.S.

Risk factors for breast cancer include:

- Family history of breast cancer
- [BRCA1/BRCA2 gene mutation](#)
- Obesity
- Over age 50

The [U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommends](#) that women **age 50-74** get a mammogram to screen for breast cancer every other year.

The [American Cancer Society recommends](#) that women at average risk for breast cancer begin bi-annual mammography screenings at **age 45**.

Early detection of breast cancer increases the survival rate.

How is BlueCross addressing cancer in Tennessee?

The BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee Health Foundation:

- Supports local chapters of the American Cancer Society and other cancer-focused organizations.
- Awarded a \$50,000 grant to [Hope Lodge](#), a residence for adult cancer patients traveling to Memphis for cancer treatment.
- Supports the [Tennessee Breast Cancer Coalition](#) in its efforts to [help women](#) facing breast cancer.

Member services and support

In addition to supporting charitable programs that benefit all Tennesseans, BlueCross also has programs in place to support members affected by cancer.

- BlueCross provides care coordination services for members with cancer, including specialty care management for those needing inpatient or hospice services.
- Care managers assist and educate members, families and health care providers on decision making processes and treatment options.
- We refer members to Blue Distinction Centers of Excellence, which are health care providers who meet high evidence-based standards for clinical quality of care.
- We also use data-driven outreach campaigns to help ensure members are getting the preventive and maintenance care recommended based on their individual health needs and risk factors.

Visit bcbst.com to learn more or access these services.