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What Is Cancer?

Cancer is not one disease, but a group of diseases. For example, lung cancer is a completely different disease than colorectal cancer. All cancers have one thing in common, they can grow and spread uncontrollably if not diagnosed at an early stage and properly treated.

Cancer is caused by many things, like smoking, poor diet, and/or family history. The greatest risk factor for any cancer is increasing age. The risk of getting cancer increases with age. The risk of developing cancer differs for men and women. In the United States, one out of two men and one out of three women will have cancer in his or her lifetime.

What Is Cancer Incidence?

Cancer *incidence* is a measure of how many *new cancer cases* occurred in a certain period of time. A cancer *incidence rate* tells how many cancers were diagnosed per 100,000 people in the population. (For example, a cancer incidence rate of 400 means that for every 100,000 people, 400 cancers were diagnosed).

Incidence rates can be *age-adjusted*, meaning that the age structure of the population is taken into account when rates are calculated. Adjusting for age allows us to compare rates by removing differences in the age structure among different populations. Incidence rates shown below are age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population.

What Is Cancer Mortality?

Cancer *mortality* is a measure of how many *cancer deaths* occurred in a certain period of time. A cancer *mortality rate* tells how many people died from cancer per 100,000 people in the population. (For example, a cancer mortality rate of 150 means that for every 100,000 people in the population, 150 died from cancer).

Cancer mortality rates can also be *age-adjusted*, taking into account the age structure of the population. Mortality rates shown below are age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population.

Impact of Cancer: US, SC, and SC County

The American Cancer Society (ACS) estimates that 1,918,030 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in the United States in 2022. This translates to 5,255 new diagnoses each day. Furthermore, an estimated 609,360 people in the United States are expected to die from cancer in 2022.

In South Carolina, ACS estimates 33,440 new cases of cancer will be diagnosed in 2022 or over 92 new cancer cases diagnosed each day, while an estimated 10,850 South Carolinians will die from cancer in 2022. The four most common cancers in SC are cancers of the lung, breast (female), prostate, and colon/rectum. The four leading cancer causes of death in SC are lung, colon/rectum, breast (female), and pancreas.

Tables 1 through 4 below show the number of new cancer cases and deaths for Oconee County, including age-adjusted rates for cancers in the county and for the state of SC. The last column in each table shows how the county ranks in comparison to the other 45 SC counties. A rank of 1 means that a county has the highest rate of any county, while a rank of 46 means that a county has the lowest rate of any SC county. *At this time, the most recent cancer statistics for South Carolina and the United States are for new cases diagnosed in 2019. Deaths occurring in 2019 are also used.*

Table 1 shows 5-year cancer incidence data for Oconee County and SC for all cancers by sex and race, including Oconee County's rank in SC compared to all other SC counties.

Table 1. Cancer Incidence by Sex and Race, 2015-2019, Oconee County and South Carolina*

	SC	Oconee County		SC rank
	5-year rate	5-year rate	new cases*	
all	444	454	540	18
male	494	508	294	20
female	407	414	246	17
white	445	460	507	16
black	433	398	29	38

*Counts are annual averages based on 5 years of data. 5-year rates are per 100,000 age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population. Statistics do not include *in situ* cancers, except for bladder. Source: SC Central Cancer Registry. ~ Statistic could not be calculated (small counts).

Table 2 shows 5-year cancer mortality data for Oconee County and SC for all cancers by sex and race, including Oconee County’s rank in SC compared to all other SC counties.

Table 2. Cancer Mortality by Sex and Race, 2015-2019, Oconee County and South Carolina*

	SC	Oconee County		SC rank
	5-year rate	5-year rate	lives lost*	
all	161	157	190	35
male	198	191	106	33
female	134	131	84	34
white	157	159	179	29
black	181	158	11	42

*Counts are annual averages based on 5 years of data. 5-year rates are per 100,000 age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population. Sources: SC Central Cancer Registry and SC Vital Records. ~ Statistic could not be calculated (small counts).

Table 3 shows 5-year cancer incidence data for Oconee County and SC for selected cancers, including Oconee County’s rank in SC compared to all other SC counties.

Table 3. Cancer Incidence for Selected Cancers, 2015-2019, Oconee County and South Carolina*

cancer	SC	Oconee County		SC rank
	5-year rate	5-year rate	new cases*	
breast (female)	131	127	75	24
prostate (male)	113	106	69	31
lung/bronchus	61	61	78	31
colon/rectum	37	38	43	26
pancreas	14	14	17	23

*Counts are annual averages based on 5 years of data. 5-year rates are per 100,000 age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population. Statistics do not include *in situ* cancers, except for bladder. Source: SC Central Cancer Registry. ~ Statistic could not be calculated (small counts).

Table 4 shows 5-year cancer mortality data for Oconee County and SC for selected cancers, including Oconee County’s rank in SC compared to all other SC counties.

Table 4. Cancer Mortality for Selected Cancers, 2015-2019, Oconee County and South Carolina*

cancer	SC	Oconee County		SC rank
	5-year rate	5-year rate	lives lost*	
breast (female)	21	19	11	36
prostate (male)	21	20	10	29
lung/bronchus	41	44	55	23
colon/rectum	14	11	14	45
pancreas	11	13	16	17

*Counts are annual averages based on 5 years of data. 5-year rates are per 100,000 age-adjusted to the 2000 US standard population. Sources: SC Central Cancer Registry and SC Vital Records. ~ Statistic could not be calculated (small counts).

Table 5 shows the percentage of cancers diagnosed in early and late stages of disease in Oconee County and SC. Cancers diagnosed in late stages lessen the potential for successful treatment and raise the risk of premature loss of life.

Table 5. All Cancers by Stage of Diagnosis, 2015-2019, Oconee County and South Carolina*

	SC	Oconee County
	Percent of all cancers	Percent of all cancers
Early Stage	47.7	47.0
Late Stage	38.4	38.9
Unknown Stage	13.9	14.1

*Percents (proportions) shown are (rounded) based on 5 years of data. Statistics include *in situ* cancers.

Source: SC Central Cancer Registry.

Breast Cancer in Oconee County

Among women, breast cancer was the number 1 most commonly diagnosed cancer and the number 2 leading cause of cancer death from 2015-2019. For this 5-year period, there was an annual average of 75 new female breast cancer cases diagnosed and 11 deaths from this disease.

Prostate Cancer in Oconee County

Among men, prostate cancer was the number 1 most commonly diagnosed cancer and the number 2 leading cause of cancer death from 2015-2019. For this 5-year period, there was an annual average of 69 new prostate cancer cases diagnosed and 10 deaths from this disease.

Lung Cancer in Oconee County

Lung Cancer was the number 1 most commonly diagnosed cancer and the number 1 leading cause of cancer death from 2015-2019. For this 5-year period, there was an annual average of 78 new lung cancer cases diagnosed and 55 deaths from this disease.

Colorectal Cancer in Oconee County

Colorectal cancer was the number 4 most commonly diagnosed cancer and the number 3 leading cause of cancer death from 2015-2019. For this 5-year period, there was an annual average of 43 new colorectal cancer cases diagnosed and 14 deaths from this disease.

Pancreatic Cancer in Oconee County

Pancreatic cancer was the number 10 most commonly diagnosed cancer and the number 2 leading cause of cancer death from 2015-2019. For this 5-year period, there was an annual

average of 17 new pancreatic cancer cases diagnosed and 16 deaths from this disease.

Screening

Men and women should speak with their doctor about the pros and cons of screening and to determine their level of risk.

The Best Chance Network (BCN) provides breast cancer screenings (ages 30-64) and cervical cancer screenings (ages 21-64) for women with incomes at or below 250% of the federal poverty level, screening thousands of women each year. For more information see: <http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/DiseasesandConditions/Cancer/FreeCancerScreenings/>

Notes: Data are subject to change as data sets are updated. Rates are per 100,000 and age-adjusted to the 2000 U.S. standard population. Statistics do not include *in situ* cancers, except for bladder. The following suppression rules may have been applied to the data in the text and tables above: counts of 1-4 are recorded as less than 5; counts of 5-9 are rounded to 10. Rates based on counts fewer than 16 are suppressed (~).

Resources

- SC Central Cancer Registry (DHEC) <https://www.scdhec.gov/CancerRegistry>
- American Cancer Society <http://www.cancer.org/research/cancerfactsstatistics/>
- CDC National Program of Cancer Registries
- United States Cancer Statistics <http://apps.nccd.cdc.gov/uscs/>
- Division of Cancer Prevention and Control (DHEC) <http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/DiseasesandConditions/Cancer/>
- Division of Tobacco Prevention and Control (DHEC) <http://www.scdhec.gov/Health/TobaccoCessation/>
- SC Cancer Alliance

