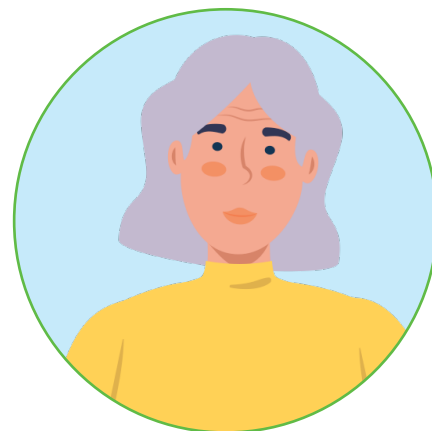


Monitoring Cancer in Minnesota

Cancer is a common disease, affecting thousands of Minnesotans and their loved ones each year. Every state in the nation has a reporting system to learn about cancer. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) collects and learns from public health cancer data through the Minnesota Cancer Reporting System (MCRS). The data helps MDH understand and make decisions about how to help with cancer prevention and control in Minnesota.

The result is that the MDH and local partners offer programs that can help prevent cancer and reduce the impact the disease has on people.



Minnesota Cancer Reporting System

The MCRS is an important program in the fight against cancer in Minnesota. The 1987 Minnesota Legislature established the statewide reporting system to ensure that accurate, complete, and timely data about newly diagnosed cancers is available. This data can inform planning and decision-making at the local, state, and national levels, and foster research into the causes of different cancers.

MCRS collects cancer and demographic data on Minnesotans diagnosed with new cancers from hospitals, clinics, and laboratories. MCRS follows all state data protection privacy laws and regulations.

MCRS is the primary source of cancer data in Minnesota. MCRS data help us understand how cancer impacts Minnesotans and which populations are at greatest risk, and assign resources accordingly.

What MCRS data can do

Local, state, and national experts use cancer data and analysis of that data to develop, fund, carry out and evaluate public health programs aimed at reducing

the risk of developing various cancers. MCRS data are essential to these efforts. MCRS data is used to:

- Increase vaccinations for hepatitis B and human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Engage with different communities to connect patients to breast and cervical cancer screenings
- Help health care systems decide how to spend funds and support cancer patients
- Study the causes of different types of cancers, risk factors, and safety of various treatments

What MCRS data cannot do

MCRS cancer rates do not provide information on any one person's chance of developing a cancer. Cancer rates cannot be used to identify the causes of cancer for individuals. Instead, MCRS cancer rates tell us about the risk of a cancer diagnosis in specific populations or communities.

Cancer rates in populations fluctuate over time. It is not unusual to see increases in cancer occurrence followed by decreases, especially in small communities. In fact, rates for small communities often vary drastically from one year to the next.



With few exceptions, MCRS cancer rates in communities are not useful in identifying potential cancer risks from exposure to low levels of chemical contaminants in the environment. Measuring people's actual exposure levels to environmental contaminants is challenging at best. It is often found to be inaccurate, especially over time.

MCRS data cannot be used to identify the exact causes of cancer in individuals—cancer is a group of more than 100 complex biological diseases that have many different risk factors.

For more detailed information about cancer and the causes of cancer, see “What is Cancer?” available at www.health.state.mn.us/cancerandenvironment.

Clear determinations are difficult to make because cancer statistics cannot establish cause and effect. They also cannot identify small increases in cancers over and above the normal variation across populations and geography.

MCRS does not have information on other factors that affect the risk of developing cancer, such as lifestyle factors (tobacco use, overweight, diet, etc.) medical history, genetics, and family history of cancer, and lifetime exposures to numerous chemicals. Thus, studying cancer rates in specific communities, unfortunately, almost never provides insight into the causes of cancer.



How can I report concerns about cancer in my community?

To share concerns about cancer in your community, please contact the **Minnesota Cancer Reporting System** at 651-201-5900 or email health.mcrcs@state.mn.us.

To report concerns about cancer in your community due to exposure to an environmental contaminant, please contact the **Minnesota Department of Health Environmental Health Division** at 651-201-4897 or email health.hazard@state.mn.us.

Did You Know?

Lower income communities and communities of color are more likely to live near sources of pollution, such as industrial manufacturing and heavy vehicle traffic. Being close to such sources may increase exposure to harmful pollutants and cancer risk.



What can I do if I have concerns about cancer?

Talk to a health care provider. If you have health concerns about cancer it is important to discuss your questions with a health care professional, such as a physician, nurse practitioner, traditional healer, community health worker, or community health representative.

Screening can identify certain cancers early when they are more easily treatable and reduce the risk of death from those cancers. Effective screening programs exist for breast, cervical, colorectal, and lung cancers.

Learn more. Visit our website at www.health.state.mn.us for information about cancer, or www.health.state.mn.us/cancerandenvironment for information about cancer and the environment.

Review lifestyle factors. Preventing cancer through healthy daily living is important. For more information, see the “Lowering Your Risk for Cancer” information sheet www.health.state.mn.us/cancerandenvironment.

Resources

A list of substances known to elevate the risk of cancer can be found on our website, www.health.state.mn.us/cancerandenvironment.

The American Cancer Society (ACS) (www.cancer.org/about-us/local/minnesota.html) also provides information and resources for Minnesotans with cancer.

To learn more about cancer, cancer resources, and prevention, visit us at our website, www.health.state.mn.us/cancerandenvironment.



The Minnesota Department of Health is here for you.

Our vision is for health equity in Minnesota, where all communities are thriving and all people have what they need to be healthy.