

Frequently Asked Questions

What does this report tell me?

- The annual number of newly diagnosed cancer cases.
- The number of cancer deaths.
- Differences in stage at which the cancer is diagnosed, a vital factor in determining health outcomes.
- Data described at the individual community level for 24 different types of cancer.

The report describes differences in the cancer burden across many different levels including gender, race, and geography. Where possible, it compares the amount of cancer in our community with nationwide levels. Also included are the number of cases diagnosed and/or the number of related deaths from 2005-2009, the most recent data available at the time of analysis.

How is this report different than the 2011 Cancer Report?

The current review of 2005-2009 Cuyahoga County cancer data provides updated statistics for our community that have been compared to Cuyahoga County's 2002-2006 cancer incidence and mortality rates as presented in 2011 Cancer Report. This update also takes a more in-depth look at stage at diagnosis for eight different cancers by geography. These include female breast, cervix, colon and rectum, lung and bronchus, melanoma of the skin, oral cavity and pharynx, prostate, and testicular cancer. These particular sites/types were chosen because of the established or potential screening methods that have been identified.¹⁰ Information on individual types of cancer, risk factors for particular cancers, and county-wide maps can be found in the 2011 Cancer Report.

How will the report be used?

- The local public health and medical community can use the report to inform future preventive services and programming.
- The academic community uses the report to help guide future research initiatives.
- Community service agencies can use the report to help plan for existing and future resource needs.
- The public gains a better understanding of the amount of cancer that exists within their community.
- The public will be presented with screening information that may reduce their risk of cancer.

Why is this report important?

One of the core functions of public health is to conduct and disseminate regional assessments focused on population health status and public health issues.

This report is intended to create awareness of how much cancer exists within Cuyahoga County as it is the second-leading cause of death at the national, state, and local level. The American Cancer Society has estimated that approximately one of every two males and one of every three females will develop cancer in his or her lifetime. One of every four males and one of every five

females will die from cancer. While most of us have experienced the devastating impact of cancer on our families and friends, these unfortunate statistics are not widely understood.

We are hopeful that this report will serve as an important community resource for many different audiences and purposes.

Why are 24 different types of cancer cited in the report?

The 24 types identified in our report are the same ones used in state and national studies. In order for comparisons of local cancer data to be made to the state of Ohio and the nation, groupings for these particular cancer types were established based on the annual reports published by the Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System (OCISS) and the Surveillance Epidemiology and End Results (SEER).

Why was data from 2005-2009 used as the basis for the report?

At the time that this report was created, 2005-2009 was the most recent cancer diagnosis data available from the Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System (OCISS).

What is a primary site?

There are steps that physicians take to determine the spot from where a cancer may have originated. These locations are called primary sites. If a cancer has spread and caused additional cancers in the body, the cases are not counted more than once. However, one risk factor for developing cancer is having a personal history of cancer; therefore if a person develops more than one primary site of cancer, then each occurrence would be counted as a separate case in our analysis.

Why is staging important?

Staging is critical in helping physicians plan appropriate treatment and estimate a person's prognosis since it is a measure of the severity of one's cancer and the extent to which it has or has not spread in the body. In this report, we categorize stage into early and late. Early staging generally includes cases where the cancer is limited to the site in which it began. Late staging means that the cancer has spread beyond the initial place of diagnosis.

How is our county doing compared to the nation?

There are approximately 7,629 new cases of invasive cancer of all types diagnosed each year among Cuyahoga County residents with an age-adjusted rate of 488.4 per 100,000 people. This rate is 5% higher than the nation (465.2 per 100,000).

Additionally, there are approximately 3,191 cancer deaths of all types each year among Cuyahoga County residents with an age-adjusted rate of 196.3 per 100,000 people. This rate is 9% higher than the nation (178.7 per 100,000).

The most diagnosed cases of cancer in our county were consistent with those diagnosed in the nation. These included lung and bronchus cancer, breast cancer, prostate cancer, and colon and rectum cancer.

At the time that this report was created, the State of Ohio cancer incidence and mortality rates for 2005-2009 were not available. Please visit the Ohio Cancer Incidence Surveillance System (OCISS) website for current statistical reports.

Are there factors in my community that may contribute to me developing cancer?

It is important to recognize that because of the complex nature of cancer and its causes, along with the limited data available for each case of cancer, it is not possible to address specific causes or reasons for the observed number or rates of cancer. Additionally, the presentation of this report is not meant to be an environmental assessment of the community.

Cancer is a multifactorial disease, meaning that many things can lead to its development. Behavioral choices, like tobacco use, level of physical activity, and diet may play a role, in addition to family history, genetics and environmental exposures throughout our lives. Given these complexities, it is important to note that this report is not intended to identify the reasons why cancer rates may be elevated in one community or neighborhood in comparison to another.

What can I do to have the best chance of staying healthy and avoiding cancer?

The Cuyahoga County Board of Health promotes guidelines recommended by the American Cancer Society as well as talking with a doctor about individual risk factors and making decisions about appropriate screening.

It is not possible to prevent all cancers. However, the best way to reduce the risk of cancer is to reduce the risk factors associated with cancer. Many of these include eating a healthy diet that includes fruits and vegetables, being physically active, refraining from smoking, limiting alcohol use, and maintaining a healthy body weight. These healthy lifestyle modifications will also be beneficial in helping to reduce the risk of other health diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and stroke.

For more information about prevention, please visit www.cancer.org.

Where can I direct my comments and questions regarding the information?

Please contact Becky Gawelek bgawelek@ccbh.net regarding questions or comments. Feedback is welcomed and appreciated.