

US cancer death rates continue sharp drop, down 22% over two decades

In 1991 American deaths from cancer reached an historic peak, claiming the lives of 215 out of 100,000 citizens. In the two decades since that all-time high, U.S. cancer deaths have fallen 22 percent, according to the American Cancer Society's recently issued ["Cancer Facts & Figures 2015."](#) This drop in mortality rate is equivalent to upwards of 1.5 million lives spared – representing more people than the populations of Seattle and Portland combined.

According to the American Cancer Society report, these overall declines reflect the ongoing decreases in mortality from the four major cancers (lung, breast, prostate, and colorectal). The lives saved can be credited to reduced tobacco use, improvements in early detection and treatment, better screening, and new insights regarding cancer prevention.

Although rates of major cancers may be declining, the ACS data indicates that mortality rates are rising for both men and women related to cancers of the oropharynx, anus, liver, pancreas and soft tissue. In men, the report showed that incidence rates have increased for non-Hodgkin lymphoma and human papillomavirus-positive oropharyngeal cancers. In women, rates of esophageal adenocarcinoma and uterine cancer also are increasing.

"Eliminating cancer has turned out to be much more complicated than the research and public community imagined 40 years ago with the National Cancer Act," said Dr. Polly Newcomb, head of the Fred Hutchinson Cancer Research Center Prevention Program.

Read full, original story: [Cancer: Down, but not out](#)