

## Pancreatic cancer rates are surging. Here's why

Five years ago [pancreatic cancer] was the fourth-leading cause of cancer deaths in the U.S. Today it's number three and expected to soon overtake colon cancer for the number-two spot, right behind lung cancer. Even more frightening, this lethal condition is becoming more common.

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What's behind these trends? There are multiple intersecting factors at work.

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[R]efined ways of testing biopsied tissue and higher-resolution imaging have meant that mystery tumors that once couldn't be seen or were labeled "of unknown origin" can now be identified, and some turn out to be pancreatic. The aging of our population also contributes: it's pushing up the rates of many kinds of cancer.

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Smokers face more than twice a nonsmoker's risk of pancreatic cancer, and even though smoking has slumped in the U.S., there is a 30- to 40-year lag time before we see a corresponding drop in cancer rates. In theory, pancreatic cancer should be waning, thanks to the dramatic falloff in smoking that began in the 1970s. But sadly, a new villain on the block is taking up some of the slack: soaring rates of obesity and type 2 diabetes, which are also risk factors.

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[P]recision medicine therapies will ultimately help his patients, particularly the 10 percent or so whose cancer is more driven by heredity than way of life. But the bigger message is prevention, [oncologist Robert Wolff] says.

**Read full, original post:** [Why Pancreatic Cancer Is on the Rise](#)