

# NATIVE HAWAIIAN CANCER FACT SHEET

## **Q: What is cancer?**

A: Cancer is a disease that begins if new cells, the body's basic building materials, grow when the body does not need them to, or when old cells do not die when they should. These "extra" cells build up and form a lump called a tumor. A tumor can grow if it is not treated. There are two types of tumors. One causes cancer (malignant tumor) and the other does not (benign tumor).

## **Q: How is cancer treated?**

A: There are treatment options for different cancers including: surgery to remove the cancer, radiation therapy to burn the cancer cells, and chemotherapy to poison the cancer cells with drugs. Other methods include drug therapy that stops the production of hormones (that promote cancer), or the removal of organs that produce hormones, microbiology (angiogenesis) to block continued growth of cancer cells, biological therapy which stimulates the immune system to help patients resist the side effects of cancer treatment, and other types of therapy.

## **Q: How can cancer be prevented?**

A: People can lower their chances of getting cancer by choosing foods with less fat, eating more vegetables, fruits and whole grains, and not smoking or chewing tobacco. Regular exercise, weight control, and a healthy lifestyle can help prevent cancer. People can also protect themselves by getting regular checkups and screenings to find cancer early, when it is most curable. This is especially important for people with a family history of cancer.

## **Q: Is cancer a death sentence?**

A: NO. Cancer treatments are getting better and better and many Hawaiians who get treatment while the cancer is in early stages of growth may have a normal life span. Cancer is gradually becoming more of a "chronic" disease, like diabetes, rather than a cause of death.

## **Select Facts from Hawai'i Cancer Facts & Figures 2010**

- Each year, about 6,000 men and women in Hawai'i are diagnosed with cancer, and more than 2,000 die from the disease.
- Native Hawaiian men and women have the highest cancer mortality rates.
- Native Hawaiian men and women have the highest lung cancer incidence and mortality rates.

### **Native Hawaiian Women**

- Have the highest cancer incidence rates
- Have the highest breast cancer incidence and mortality rates
- Most frequently diagnosed with breast cancer, followed by lung cancer, and corpus uteri cancer
- The leading cause of cancer death is lung cancer, followed by breast cancer and pancreatic cancer.

### **Native Hawaiian Men**

- Most frequently diagnosed with prostate cancer, followed by lung cancer, and colorectal cancer
- The leading cause of cancer death is lung cancer, followed by colorectal cancer, and prostate cancer.



**'IMI HALE**

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## Q: Why are some groups at higher risk for getting cancer?

A: Cancer continues to increase among Native Hawaiian (NH), American Indian, and Alaska Native populations in the U.S. and Canada. Cancer is usually a disease of people over the age of 40, and a person's risk for cancer increases as he or she grows older. Most cancers in Hawai'i (75% of the 6,000 new cases of cancer each year) occur in people aged 55 years and older. Cancer can be caused by a variety of external, internal, and lifestyle factors. Be aware that many types of cancers do not have noticeable symptoms. This is one reason why it is very important to take part in regular cancer screenings. People are at greatest risk for developing cancer if they smoke, drink an average of 2 or more alcoholic drinks daily, do not get daily physical activity, or eat a lot of fast food or high fat foods.

## Q: What types of cancers do Hawaiians get most often?

A: The most common types of cancer for Hawaiian men are cancer of the lung, colon and rectum, and prostate. The most common cancers among Hawaiian women are cancers of the lung, breast, and corpus uteri. Nearly 90% of all lung cancer deaths can be linked to tobacco use, and about 1 in 5 Hawaiians smoke tobacco everyday, the highest percentage among the five major ethnic groups in Hawai'i.

## Q: How serious is cancer in the NH population?

A: Native Hawaiians have the highest cancer mortality rates among the five major ethnic groups in Hawai'i. Cancer is the first leading cause of death for Hawaiian women, and the second leading cause of death for Hawaiian men.

## Q: Where can I get more general facts about cancer?

A: There are several websites if you have access to the internet:

- American Cancer Society: [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)
- Hawai'i State Department of Health: [www.state.hi.us/doh/](http://www.state.hi.us/doh/)
- Intercultural Cancer Council: [www.iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts/](http://www.iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts/)
- National Cancer Institute: [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)
- The Smoking Quitline, NCI: [www.smokefree.gov](http://www.smokefree.gov)
- NCI's Cancer Information Service: 1-800-4-CANCER

Source: Hawai'i Cancer Facts & Figures, 2010

## A listing of some Hawai'i cancer support groups

### Queen's Medical Center

Caregiver's Support Group: Darlene Sardinha  
(808) 691-8984

Cancer Therapy: Dr. Bill Watts  
(insurance charged) (808) 691-5291

Survivorship program: Dr. Francisco Conde  
(808) 691-8914

### Castle Medical Center

Tobacco Free Support Group (808) 263-5050

Caregiver's Support Group: Sue Pignataro  
(808) 351-2918

### Straub Clinic and Hospital

Cancer Support Group: Ronni Oune  
(808) 522-4575

### Kapi'olani Medical Center

Childhood Cancer Connection: Clarissa Bueno  
(808) 224-0147

### Hui Mālama Ola Nā 'Ōiwi

Cancer Support Group: Leimomi Shearer  
1 (808) 969-9220

### Moloka'i General Hospital

Cancer Support Group: Avette Ponce  
1 (808) 553-3171

### Pacific Cancer Foundation, Maui

Caregiver's Support Group: Linda Tesar-Amimoto  
1 (808) 269-3948  
Cancer Support Group

### Pali Momi Medical Center

Cancer Support Group (808) 485-4548

### Wai'anae Coast Comprehensive Health Center

Cancer Support Groups (808) 696-1599