



NYC Vital Signs

Cancer Screening in New York City: We Can Do Much Better

Cancer kills nearly 15,000 New Yorkers every year. It is the second leading cause of death (after heart disease). Many of these deaths could be prevented through improved cancer screening, better access to health care, and simple lifestyle changes. This report provides new information on how many New York adults are being adequately screened for cancer, according to a recent survey conducted by the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Screening has been shown to reduce death from three major cancers—**colon**, **cervical**, and **breast**. In fact, examinations for colon and cervical cancer can actually *prevent* cancer by finding pre-cancerous lesions that can be removed before the cancer develops. Studies are currently underway to determine if prostate cancer screening also saves lives. No studies have shown that screening for other cancers reduces premature death.

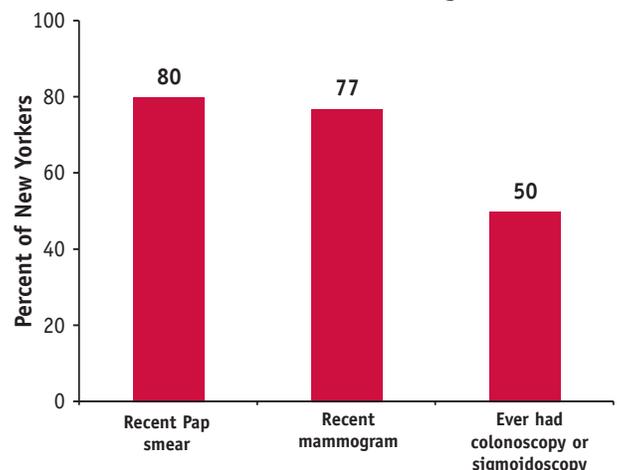
Data presented in *NYC Vital Signs* are based on the New York City Community Health Survey, a telephone survey that collects critical neighborhood-specific information on health in New York City. The 2002 survey interviewed nearly 10,000 New Yorkers, with representation from 33 communities. The survey was conducted by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene between May and June 2002.

For full survey details, see:
nyc.gov/health/survey.

Only half of adults 50 years and older ever had a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy

- Colon cancer screening is recommended for all adults 50 years and older. But only half of New Yorkers in this age group report ever having a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy, leaving nearly 1 million (995,000) adult New Yorkers at greater risk for undetected colon cancer.
- Only 80% of women in New York City had a Pap smear in the past three years, compared to 90% of women nationwide. More than 500,000 women in NYC have not had a recent Pap smear, and about 150 still die from cervical cancer each year.
- Mammograms are recommended for all women 40 years and older. Three quarters of New York City women in this age group had a mammogram in the past 2 years, similar to national levels (76%), but another 300,000 have not had a recent mammogram.

Among New Yorkers, improvements can be made for breast, cervical, and especially colon cancer screening

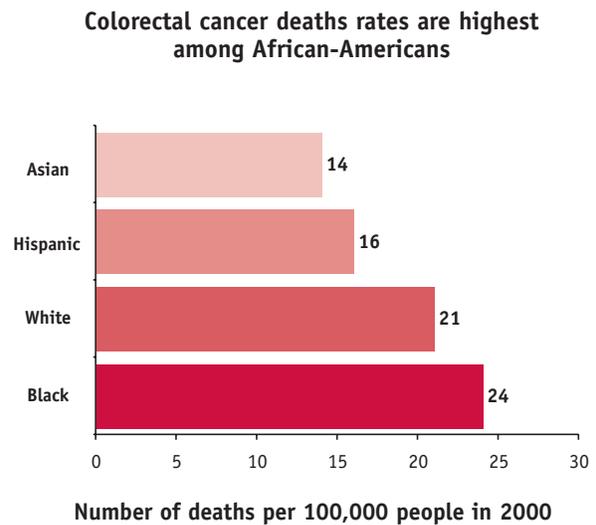
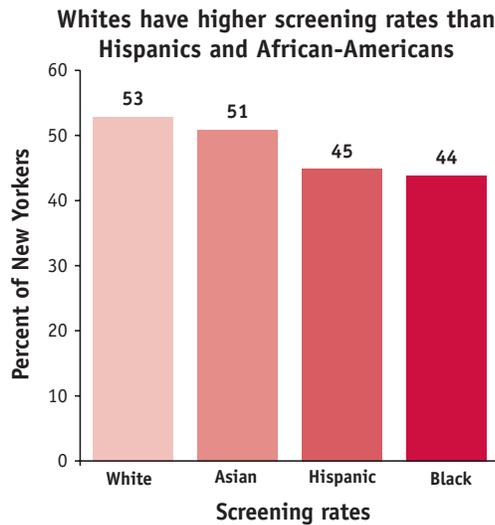


African Americans have high death, and low screening, rates for colon cancer

- Colon cancer causes more than 1,500 deaths each year in New York City, despite being nearly 100% curable if detected early.
- Among adults 50 years and older, whites are most

likely to report having been screened for colon cancer, followed by Asians, Hispanics, and blacks.

- Black and white New Yorkers are more likely to die from colon cancer than Hispanics or Asians.



No group is being screened enough for colon cancer, including higher risk groups

- Men are at higher risk than women for developing colorectal cancer. However, male New Yorkers are no more likely than female New Yorkers to get screened for colon cancer.
- While the risk of developing colon cancer increases with age, less than 60% of New Yorkers 65 years and older have ever had a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy.
- Lack of exercise increases the risk of colorectal cancer. Yet New Yorkers who do not exercise regularly are less likely than those who are physically active to get screened.
- Smoking increases a person’s risk of colon cancer. Yet, New Yorkers who currently smoke are much less likely than non-smokers to have undergone screening for colon cancer.

Ever had colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy	
Sex	
Male	51%
Female	48%
Age group (years)	
65 and over	56%
50-65	44%
Exercise weekly	
No	45%
Yes	53%
Current smoker	
Yes	41%
No	51%



Preventable. Treatable. Beatable!
 Founded by the Cancer Research and Prevention Foundation

March is Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month!

Colon Cancer Screening Resources

- National Cancer Institute: Call toll free at **1-800-4-CANCER** or visit their website www.cancer.gov
- American Cancer Society: Call toll free at **1-800-ACS-2345** or visit their website www.cancer.org

Pap smear screening in New York City is well below national targets

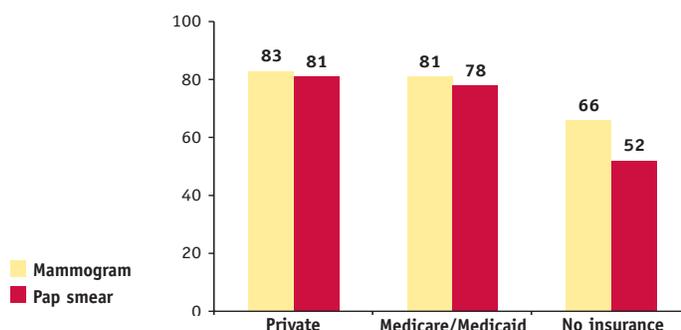
- While screening is low for all groups, less than 70% of Asian women had a Pap smear in the past 3 years—far less than other groups.
- More deaths from breast and cervical cancer occur among black women than among women in other groups, even though black women get Pap smears more often and have comparable mammogram rates.
- In New York City, foreign-born women are less likely to get regular Pap smears than US-born women.

	Pap smear past 3 years (% of women)	Cervical cancer death rate per 100,000 women	Mammogram past 2 years (% of women)	Breast cancer death rate per 100,000 women
National target	90		70	
Race/Ethnicity*				
Black	85	7	75	31
Hispanic	81	5	80	18
White	80	2	78	27
Asian	68	1	74	8
Age group (years)				
Less than 40	78	1	–	2
40–49	88	4	71	20
50–64	87	8	81	52
65 and older	71	10	80	113
Birthplace*				
United States	84	4	78	24
Foreign-born	73	3	75	28

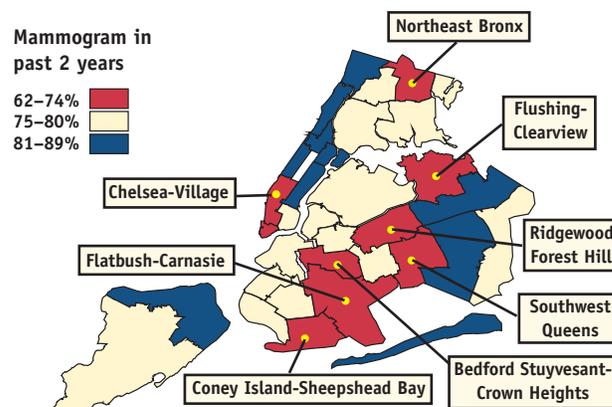
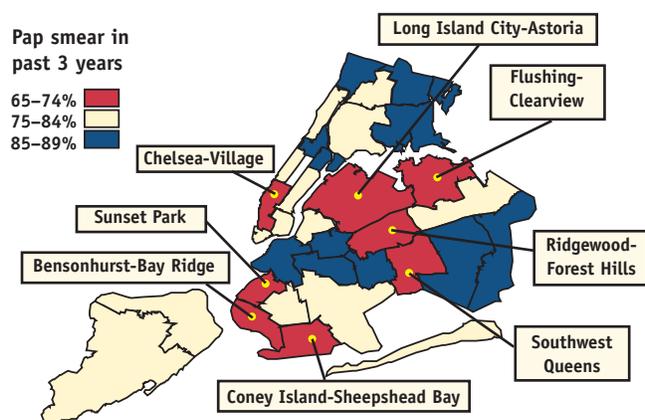
* Age-adjusted

Lack of insurance is an unnecessary barrier to breast and cervical cancer screening

- Women with no health insurance are less likely to get regular Pap smears and mammograms, even though Federal and State programs offer free screening to low-income and uninsured women.



Breast and cervical cancer screening rates are particularly low in some areas



- Five neighborhoods had low screening rates for both Pap smear and mammography: Flushing-Clearview, Ridgewood-Forest Hills, Southwest Queens, Coney Island-Sheepshead Bay, and Chelsea-Village.

For information on where to get Pap smears and mammograms, visit the website: www.health.state.us/nysdoh/ or call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345.

Recommendations

Colonoscopy is **STRONGLY** recommended for all people 50 years of age and older.

- Several types of colon cancer tests exist, but colonoscopy examines the entire colon, is safe and painless, and is the only test that can actually remove polyps before they develop into cancer. Any colon screening test is better than no test. Recommended time frames vary:
 - Colonoscopy every 10 years
 - Fecal Occult Blood Test (FOBT) every year
 - Flexible Sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
 - Annual FOBT + Flex Sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- People with a personal or family history of colorectal cancer or polyps—especially if family members were younger than 50 years when diagnosed—are at higher risk and should be screened before 50 years of age.

Routine Pap smears are **STRONGLY** recommended for all women who are:

- Sexually active, and
- Have not had a hysterectomy
- Most organizations recommend women get Pap smears every 1–3 years, depending on a woman's risk factors and past results.
- Screening is *no longer* recommended for women over 65 years of age with recent normal Pap smear results and no major risk factors for cervical cancer.

Mammograms are recommended every 1–2 years for all women 40 years of age and older.

- Women with a family history of breast cancer should seek expert medical advice about whether to begin screening *before* 40 years of age and how often to get screened.

There is insufficient evidence to make recommendations on prostate cancer screening; interested individuals should consult with their doctor.

A report from the New York City Community Health Survey



nyc.gov/health

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New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene

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NYC Vital Signs features information on critical aspects of public health in New York City.

To contact NYC Vital Signs, e-mail survey@health.nyc.gov.

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