Early Detection Saves Lives – Guide to Cancer Screenings and Prevention Transcript

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Why Early Cancer Detection Matters

Early detection equals better outcomes. When a cancer is detected early, there are often more treatment options available, and you have a chance for a long, healthy life, and we want to make sure that everyone has that opportunity.

One of the primary reasons people aren't getting screened is they simply don't know they need it to be screened. And that's particularly true for people that aren't experiencing any signs or symptoms or people that don't have a family history of cancer.

What we want people to know is that routine screenings are for everyone. Very often, cancer isn't going to show any signs or symptoms in early stages.

And the vast majority of cancer diagnoses are in people with no family history. So schedule your routine screenings. You can find information about the screenings you need at every age.

You can find tools that you can personalize and print out to take with you to your provider's office. You can find listings of free and low-cost providers for cancer screenings on our website at preventcancer.org.

Hey everyone, this is Jonathan Marks from GoToHealth. How are you today? U. S. adults report that their routine cancer screening rates are on the decline.

But there is hope on the horizon.

Screening Declines and New Testing Options

New screening technologies could encourage everybody to prioritize your screenings. According to the Prevent Cancer Foundation's 2025 Early Detection Survey, 64% of adults who are behind on at least one routine cancer screening say they would be more likely to prioritize screening if there were innovative options such as at-home tests, a different or less invasive test or screening, or a faster test, or a less frequent test.

Multi-cancer early detection, MCED, testing which are blood tests which have the potential to identify the presence of cancer for more than one cancer at a time, could be the key to unlocking better health outcomes for all.

Exciting advancements in early detection are already reshaping the future of screening. From AI-powered tools to groundbreaking non-invasive tests, Researchers are pushing the boundaries of innovation to make screenings both effective and available in more settings.

The fact is, early detection means better outcomes. The Prevent Cancer Foundation is dedicated to equipping people with the tools they need to check their health and stay ahead of cancer.

If you don't know where to start, check out the Foundation's list of screenings you need at every age. Free and low-cost cancer screening resources and a tool to create your own personalized screening plan.

You can visit the website to learn more at preventcancer.org.

How Routine Screenings Vary by Age and Risk

We're talking today with Alison Steinberg MSN MPH. She's the strategic director of the Cancer Prevention and

Early Detection Program at the Prevent Cancer Foundation.

And just a quick reminder, if you like what you hear today, please leave us a five-star review on Apple, Spotify, YouTube, or wherever you're listening to us.

It helps keep this content free and reaching the right ears. Thanks in advance. So welcome to the show, Allison Steinberg. How are you today? I'm great.

Thank you for having me. Good. So tell us, what did your 2025 early detection survey tell us about the drop in rates of cancer screening? What's going on?

Yeah. So we do a early detection survey annually at the Prevent Cancer Foundation, and it revealed that routine cancer screening rates are on the decline.

Unfortunately, it showed that of adults 21 years of age and older, only 51% have had a routine medical appointment or a routine cancer screening in the last year.

And what's concerning is that is actually a 10 percentage point drop from the 2024 survey. Do we know why this is happening? A lot of it is misconceptions and just lack of education and awareness.

So educate us today. That's what I want to do in this show. So tell us what is multi-cancer early detection. Multi-cancer early detection tests are blood tests.

They can identify the presence of cancer. For more than one cancer at a time and our survey tells us that people are interested in these tests because of the ease at which they can complete them.

It is important though to note that these tests are designed to be complimentary to not a replacement for your existing routine cancer screenings. However, the FDA approval of these tests along with insurance coverage really need to be the key to hopefully unlocking better health outcomes for all.

And who before we talk about the MCED or the multi-cancer early detection, you say that it shouldn't replace regular cancer screenings.

Innovations Like HPV Self-Collection and At-Home Tests

Who does? normal cancer screenings, how often should they be done? Is it annual? And when you go in and you get one cancer screening, is that for all cancers or do we have to go to different doctors to get different screenings?

Yeah, so great questions. The first step is to have the conversation with your primary care provider. A lot of people get scared by the word screening, but really Screening just helps us know more information and early detection can help us treat better.

We know that early detection equals better outcomes. So for example, based on your age and your family history, the screenings will vary from person to person.

One good thing that we have on our website at preventcancer.org is information about how to personalize your recommendations and create your own screening tool.

And we really break it down so that you can see which screening recommendations are needed for you. So for example, breast cancer. Right now, ages 25 to 39, you want to have a three-year checkup with your health care provider for a risk assessment and a clinical breast exam.

But beginning at age 40, That's when individuals should have an annual checkup and a screening mammogram annually if you're at average risk. So what I'm speaking about is average risk.

So it really does vary by cancer type. We have screenings for breast cancer, cervical cancer, colorectal. We have screening for prostate cancer, and then there are other types of cancers like lung, oral, liver, and skin, and testicular that all have recommendations based on your age and risk.

Wow. And do you have to go to a different doctor for each one of these or can your general practitioner do all of these? So your general practitioner will most likely send you out to a specialist.

It just depends. Some women can have some of their breasts and cervical screenings by, it depends on their PCP, if it's a women's health doctor, but really what you want to do is talk to your PCP about it.

Insurance Coverage and Access Challenges

Also talk to your friends and family, talk to your, your family to learn your history and and really take control of your health and know when you should start screening and whether or not your average risk or might be at a heightened risk.

So are there other innovative approaches for getting screened in addition to the multi-cancer early detection blood test? Yeah. So last year, the FDA approved a self-administered test for human papillomavirus, HPV, in a healthcare setting.

And HPV is the leading cause of cervical cancer. So this option gives people more time in their busy schedules to really prioritize screening, which was one of the top reasons why they cited not getting screened for cervical cancer in our survey.

And when given the information about this option to self-collect at a clinic, 82% of survey respondents Eligible for cervical cancer screening said they would be more likely to complete the HPV test and screening.

So that's cervical. Colorectal is another one. When people hear the words colorectal cancer, colon cancer, their minds often go right to colonoscopy.

Prevent Cancer Foundationu2019s Mission and Resources

But there are other options out there. Again, depending on your individual or in family history. You could be eligible for one of the newer stool-based test options.

They have multi-target stool DNA tests. And so you can talk to your healthcare provider about which options are available. And what's great is that more than a quarter of our survey participants who aren't up to date or aren't sure if they're up to date with their colorectal cancer screening said they would be more likely to prioritize it if there were an option to screen with a blood test.

Or even to do the screening at home. Yes. That seems to be a key thing that I'm hearing there is the ability to do screenings at home so you don't have to make a doctor's appointment.

Correct. In our survey, it did show that transportation to screenings was a concern as well. So this really will help for those individuals who are missing out on screening.

Great. Now does insurance cover the cost of these new approaches to cancer screening or are we still waiting for the ball to drop on coverage? Yeah, so that is one of the areas that we still need better answers and more advocacy for.

Right now we really are waiting to make sure that these screenings are covered. It just depends on your type of healthcare, whether it be Medicare, Medicaid, private insurance.

So it really is hard to give a broad sweeping answer, but we're moving towards in that direction, especially when something is FDA approved. So that test for HPV, the fact that it was FDA approved is really helpful, but we really

need more FDA approval of these innovative tests.

So tell us about the Prevent Cancer Foundation and how it differs from other cancer societies that are around. Sure. So our organization Focus is the only domestic organization or nonprofit that really focuses on early detection and screening.

So we do policy and advocacy. We do education and outreach. So we work with communities. We do research. So we fund innovative research on early detection.

We have research grants and fellowships. as well as prevention. We actually just launched our 2025 research grant and fellowship application cycle. So we're really happy to support those new scientific advances that really will help move the needle with early detection and prevention.

We also just do a lot of education outreach. We want to make sure that individuals have information about knowing their family history. There are a lot of tools that we have on our website.

We also host educational offerings for those who work in the outreach and community health space so that they can be aware of the newest technologies and the best ways to reach those individuals in the community and let them know by cancer type, by individual, what can they do?

Personalized Screening Plans and Final Takeaways

So those are our biggest pillars that we focus on. Great. And just to repeat what you said before, if people you visit your website at prevent cancer.org sounds like they can set up a specific testing regimen for themselves based upon their personal history.

Is that correct? Yep. Like I said earlier, early detection equals better outcomes. So the screening recommendations are confusing. So on our website, we really break it down so you can see the routine screenings that you need at every age.

So we also provide resources for free and low-cost cancer screenings, and we have tools to create your own screening plan to make things easier to be able to talk to your providers and family and friends about this.

That's a wonderful, wonderful resource. And I also love the fact that you're actually financing research, because I know of all the cutbacks at the government level.

It's so important that the Prevent Cancer Foundation is financing research. That's wonderful. Yeah, absolutely. We had a record-breaking number of applicants this year.

So we're very happy about that. Good. What last question should I have asked that I haven't asked yet? What message would you like to leave with people before we end today, Allison?

We want the public to know that early detection equals better outcomes. So have those conversations. Screening doesn't need to be scary. It's really just taking control of your health and advocating for yourself.

And really just head to our website, poke around, and we have ways to reach out to our staff if there are any questions on our website. Wonderful. So again, the website is preventcancer.org.

There we go. Great. We've been talking with Allison Steinberg, MSN MPH. She's the strategic director of the Cancer Prevention and Early Detection Program at the Prevent Cancer Foundation.

The foundation is the only US-based nonprofit organization solely dedicated to cancer prevention and early detection. Through research, education, outreach, and advocacy, they have helped countless people avoid a cancer diagnosis or detect their cancer early enough to be successfully treated.

So, as a reminder, we're building a community of people who care about living well, aging better, and showing up for their health every day. If that's you, please tap the five stars on Apple Podcasts, Spotify, YouTube, or wherever you're listening to us so that you can help others find this space too.

This has been Jonathan Marks with Go To Health. And as we say at the end of every show, go to health. Thanks for being with us. Thanks for being with us, Alison.

Take care. We'll see you again next time. Bye bye. Thank you for tuning in today to Go To Health. You are one of almost 10,000 people per day who enjoy the evidence-based health information offered by our guest health experts.

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