



Healthy Aging in Neighborhoods of Diversity across the Life Span

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The Healthy Journey

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Screening tests for cancer

Cancer statistics in the U.S. The National Cancer Institute (NCI) found that 1.9 million people will be diagnosed with cancer in the United States this year. For more information about cancer rates in the U.S., visit <https://seer.cancer.gov/statfacts/html/common.html>. The 3 most common cancers in the United States are breast cancer, prostate cancer, and lung cancer. The cancers that cause the most deaths are lung cancer and colorectal cancer.

The Maryland Department of Health reports that people living in Baltimore have a higher chance of dying from cancer than people who live in other parts of Maryland. In the HANDLS study, lung cancer is the second highest cause of death (<https://handls.nih.gov/pubs/2016-Zonderman-JAMA-IM-176-1394.pdf>). One way to lower your risk of cancer is to get screened for cancer by your doctor.

Finding cancer early makes it easier to treat

Which screenings do I need? During COVID-19, many people missed doctor visits and cancer screenings. It is possible that some cancers have gone unnoticed during COVID-19. Some cancers do not show symptoms in the early stages. Cancer screenings can still find cancer even if there are no symptoms. Finding cancer early makes it easier to treat.

Breast cancer. Screenings – mammograms and clinical breast exams screen for breast cancer. A mammogram is special x-ray of the breast.. Regular self and clinical breast exam are encouraged in addition to a mammogram. In a clinical exam a doctor or a nurse examines breasts for lumps and thickening. If mammograms cause a lot of discomfort for you, ask your health care provider if an ultrasound can be an alternative for you.

When – breast cancer screenings are recommended every 2 years for women ages 50-74. If *there* is a family history of breast cancer, women should begin breast

cancer screening earlier. Your doctor can decide when to start. You can learn more about breast cancer screenings by visiting https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/breast/basic_info/mammograms.htm.

Cervical cancer. Screenings – pap tests screen for cervical cancer. During a Pap test, a provider will use a swab to collect cells from your cervix. This test looks for abnormal cells that lead to cancer.

When – women ages 30-65 years old should screen every 3 years. Providers may recommend testing more often for women with a family history or less often for women over age 65. You can learn more about cervical cancer screenings by visiting https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/cervical/basic_info/screening.htm.

Colon cancer. Screenings – when people hear of colon cancer screening they think of the difficulty preparing for the test. New screening tests are available that may not require colon prep. Colon cancer screening is done by stool tests, CT colon tests, or colonoscopies. Stool tests can be done at home. You will collect a small amount of stool and return to your provider or lab. Your sample will be checked for signs of blood or abnormal cells. Some individuals need tests that will reveal more details of the colon. There are 2 types of tests that look into your colon. CT colon tests are also called virtual colonoscopies. CT colon tests are not as invasive as colonoscopies but require colon preparation. Your provider uses x-rays to look at images of your colon. During a colonoscopy, a provider inserts a thin tube with a light into your rectum. The tube has a tiny camera that helps your provider look for signs of cancer.

When – screening for colon cancer depends on your personal and family history. Most adults should screen between the ages of 45-75. If you are 76 or older, ask your provider if you need screening for colon cancer.

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Colonoscopies are recommended every 10 years. Stool tests are recommended every 1-3 years. CT colon tests are recommended every 5 years. You can learn more about colon cancer screenings by visiting https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/colorectal/basic_info/screening/.

Prostate cancer. Screenings – prostate cancer screening is individualized for men. It is not for everyone. Your provider will ask you some questions to determine your risk and the options for screening. Prostate cancer screening is a blood test for a protein called prostate specific antigen (PSA). For a PSA test, you give a blood sample. The lab will test if your levels of PSA are high. High levels of PSA mean that there may be cancer in the prostate or it may just be that the prostate is very large. If the PSA is high, a doctor will do further tests looking for the cause.

When – prostate cancer screenings are recommended for men ages 50-69. African American men and men with a family history of prostate cancer should begin screening when they are 45 because they have a higher risk for prostate cancer. These screenings are not recommended for men over age 70. Men should screen every 2 years. You can learn more about prostate cancer screenings by visiting <https://medlineplus.gov/prostatecancerscreening.html>.

Skin cancer. Screenings – skin self-exams and clinical exams are screenings for skin cancer. You can do a self-exam at home by looking for spots or moles on your skin. You should see a dermatologist if a spot or mole is discolored, bigger than the tip of a pencil eraser, or has an oddly shaped border. Visit <https://www.aad.org/public/diseases/skin-cancer/find/at-risk/mole-map> to see the Body Mole Map from the American Academy of Dermatology. Providers look closely at unusual skin spots during clinical exams. They may take a sample of an abnormal area on your skin to see if it is cancerous.

When – it is safe for adults of all ages to have skin cancer screenings. Many dermatologists suggest screening once a year. You may choose to screen less often if you do not notice skin changes. To learn more about skin cancer screenings, visit <https://www.cancer.gov/types/skin/patient/skin-screening-pdq>.

Cigarette smoking is a large risk for lung cancer

Lung cancer. Screenings – there is a special type of X-Ray test used to look for lung cancer. It uses a very low dose of x-Ray. A low-dose computed tomography (LDCT) scan makes pictures of your lungs. Your

provider looks at these pictures to find changes in lung tissue that might be cancer.

When – LDCTs are recommended once a year for high-risk individuals. You should schedule annual screenings if you are between ages 50-80, smoke a pack of cigarettes per day for 20 years (or 2 packs of cigarettes a day for 10 years), and currently smoke. If you do not smoke but have been exposed to chemicals like radon and asbestos, you are high risk for lung cancer. Almost half of HANDLS participants smoke or have smoked heavily in the past. This is why lung cancer is a major cause of death for HANDLS participants. If you are an active smoker or have smoked a lot in the past, please talk to your doctor about screening for lung cancer. Lung cancer screenings are not recommended if you are over 81 years old. You can learn more about lung cancer screenings by visiting <https://www.cancer.gov/types/lung/patient/lung-screening-pdq>.

Cancer prevention

The following tips may help prevent cancer and promote a healthy lifestyle: Avoid tobacco products • Wear sunscreen • Seek shade outdoors • Limit exposure to unsafe chemicals • Keep a healthy weight • Eat a healthy diet including fruits, vegetables, and whole grains • Limit alcohol use • Engage in physical activity • Know your family history • Get vaccinations, for HPV and Hepatitis B • Schedule doctor visits and ask for cancer screenings. • Avoid sex with multiple partners

If you need help to stop smoking, please ask your doctor for medications and programs. There are many programs in Baltimore City <https://health.baltimorecity.gov/sites/default/files/SMOKING%20CESSATION%20PROGRAMS%20Flyer%209-2-14%20REV.pdf>.

You can learn more about cancer prevention and risk factors by visiting <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dcpc/prevention/index.htm>.

Screenings resources in Baltimore

Cancer Prevention, Education, Screening, and Treatment Program (CPEST). Maryland's CPEST Program provides cancer prevention and detection resources for people without health insurance. The CPEST website lists phone numbers for local health department cancer programs in each of Maryland's counties.

The following programs are available for Baltimore City residents:

- Colorectal Screening and Breast/Cervical Screenings @ University of Maryland Medical Group: 410-328-4673
- Colorectal Screenings @ Medstar: 410-350-8216
- Breast/Cervical Screenings @ Medstar: 410-350-2001

For Baltimore County residents, you can consult the Colorectal Screenings through Baltimore County Department of Health: 410-887-3456

Visit https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/cancer/Pages/cf_cpest.aspx#lhd to find contact information for other counties in MD.

Baltimore City Cancer Program (BCCP). If you need breast, cervical, or colon cancer screenings, the BCCP offers free services to uninsured Baltimore residents. BCCP offers health education, screenings, and transportation. The BCCP is located within the UM Greenebaum Comprehensive Cancer Center at 3350 Wilkins Avenue, Suite 100, Baltimore, MD 21229. To enroll, call 410-328-HOPE or visit <https://www.umms.org/umgccc/cancer-services/cancer-care/baltimore-city-cancer-program>.

Ascension Saint Agnes Breast Center. The Breast Link Program at St. Agnes offers free mammograms to people in need. For more information, call 667-234-3434 or visit <https://healthcare.ascension.org/locations/maryland/mdbal/baltimore-ascension-saint-agnes-breast-center/support>.

Breast and Cervical Cancer Screening Program (BCCP). Maryland's BCCP provides breast and cervical cancer screenings to Marylanders without health insurance or with limited incomes. To learn about eligibility, call 1-800-477-9774 or visit https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/cancer/Pages/bccp_home.aspx.

Maryland Cancer Fund. The Maryland Cancer Fund offers grants to low-income MD residents for cancer diagnosis and treatment. If you are diagnosed with cancer, this grant may cover the costs of diagnostic tests. For information on how to apply for this grant, call the MD Cancer Fund coordinator at 410-767-6213 or visit https://health.maryland.gov/phpa/cancer/Pages/mcf_grants.aspx.

American Cancer Society in Maryland. The Maryland chapter of the ACS has a list of local cancer resources for Maryland residents. These resources include health information, transportation, and advocacy. For more

information, call 1-800-227-2345 or visit <https://www.cancer.org/about-us/local/maryland.html>.

Time to Screen Hotline. The Time to Screen hotline is provided by the Cancer Care and Community Oncology Alliance nonprofits. Visit <https://timetoscreen.org/> or call 1-855-53-SCREEN to talk to a specialist who can help you find cancer screenings in your area.

Next steps. If your screening results were negative, you should keep practicing a healthy lifestyle. Ask your provider when you should plan for your next screening. If your screening results were positive, your provider may suggest follow-up tests before confirming a cancer diagnosis. These diagnoses can bring many difficult emotions. You may wonder what comes next. The American Cancer Society has a list of questions to ask your provider if you have received a cancer diagnosis. This list may also be helpful if you care for someone with cancer. To see the list, visit <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/cancer-control/en/worksheets/questions-to-ask-about-my-cancer.pdf>.

Booster Shot Reminder

Second booster shots to protect against COVID-19 are available for eligible Marylanders.



If your primary vaccine series was Pfizer, you may get a second booster dose if you are age 50+ and it has been 4 months since your first booster. You may get a second booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna.

If your primary vaccine series was Moderna, you may get a second booster dose if you are age 50+ and it has been 4 months since your first booster. You may get a second booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna.

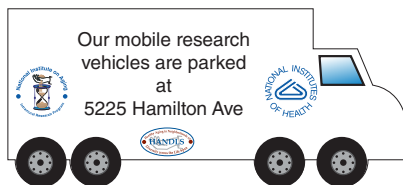
If your primary vaccine series was Johnson & Johnson, you may get a second booster dose if you are age 50+, regardless of when you received your first booster. You may get a second booster dose of Pfizer or Moderna.

Call 855-MDGOVAX to schedule your booster shot. To learn more about COVID-19 booster shots in Maryland, visit <https://covidlink.maryland.gov/content/vaccine/booster-shots/>.

Contacting HANDLS

If you'd like to be added to the HANDLS email list, please message us at handls@mail.nih.gov.

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Newsletter for the HANDLS community

The purpose of this study is to learn about changes in health over time. Using our medical research vehicles, we want to study as many people with different backgrounds as we can. We want this study to help us understand healthy aging by examining the influences of different backgrounds on changes in health over time. The information we gather will help improve health and prevent disabilities. Our goal is to gather information to improve health and prevent disabilities for people of all backgrounds, particularly in minority communities and communities with limited resources.

For information about our study call 877-677-9538 or visit our website <https://handls.nih.gov>.