

PharmaNavigator

PharmPix Clinical Department

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Lung Cancer: Persistent Leading Cause of Cancer-Related Mortality in the United States

Lung cancer continues to represent a major public health burden in the United States and remains the leading cause of cancer-related mortality in 2026. According to the *American Cancer Society's Cancer Facts & Figures 2026* report, lung and bronchus cancer is expected to account for approximately 229,410 new cases and nearly 125,000 deaths nationwide this year, despite continued declines in overall cancer mortality. These data highlight the persistent and disproportionate impact of lung cancer compared with other malignancies.

It is projected that lung cancer is going to be the second most commonly diagnosed cancer in both men and women; however, it remains the leading cause of cancer death in each group. Among men, lung cancer is expected to result in approximately 63,040 deaths, representing 19% of all cancer-related deaths. Among women, it is projected to cause nearly 61,950 deaths, accounting for 21% of cancer deaths and surpassing breast cancer as the primary cause of cancer mortality. Prognosis is strongly influenced by stage at diagnosis, with a five-year relative survival rate of 65% for localized disease, decreasing to 37% for regional disease and only 10% for distant metastatic disease.

Tobacco use remains the primary driver of lung cancer, accounting for approximately 86% of cases and 85% of deaths among adults aged 30 years and older. Although cigarette smoking prevalence has declined, 20% of U.S. adults reported use of commercial tobacco products in 2023. Lung cancer incidence and mortality have decreased over recent decades due to reduced smoking, advances in systemic therapies, and improved early detection, with death rates declining by 62% since 1990 in men and 38% since 2002 in women. Screening with low-dose computed tomography has been shown to reduce mortality among high-risk individuals, with current recommendations supporting annual screening for adults aged 50 to 80 years with a minimum 20 pack-year smoking history. Despite these gains, lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer-related death in the United States, underscoring the continued need for robust tobacco control, expanded screening access, and equitable treatment delivery.

REFERENCES:

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