

“Understanding Native American Cancer Data in Arizona”

4th Series Topic: Pancreatic Cancer

You may have been seeing a considerable amount of information about pancreatic cancer, here is why:

Top 5 Arizona Cancer Mortality Sites for Native American Females, 2016-2020		
Rank	Cancer Site	Avg Annual # of Deaths
1	Female Breast	15
2	Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct	13
3	Colorectal	12
4	Pancreas	12
5	Ovarian	11

*Data sourced from the Arizona Cancer Registry’s mortality data trends in Arizona’s Native American population from 2016-2020.

Top 5 Arizona Cancer Mortality Sites for Native American Males, 2016-2020		
Rank	Cancer Site	Avg Annual # of Deaths
1	Liver and Intrahepatic Bile Duct	18
2	Prostate	15
3	Colorectal	14
4	Pancreas	12
5	Lung and Bronchus	11

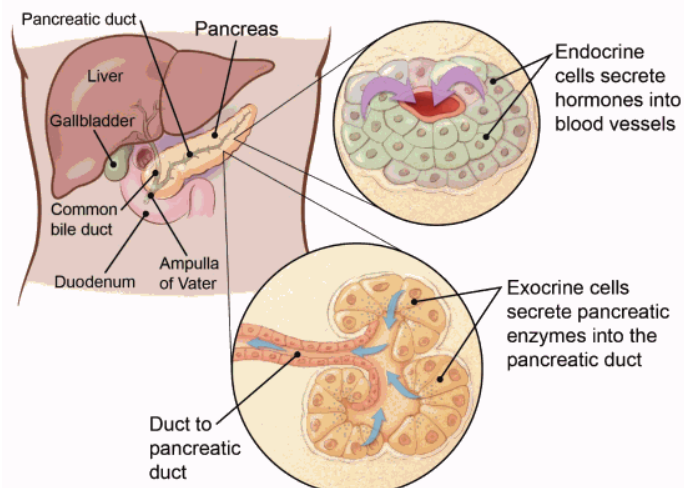
*Data sourced from the Arizona Cancer Registry’s mortality data trends in Arizona’s Native American population from 2016-2020.

Pancreatic cancer is the **fourth leading cause of cancer-related death** in Arizona Native American (NA) females and males. **Pancreatic ductal adenocarcinoma (PDAC)**, a type of pancreatic cancer, is a lethal malignancy, accounting for **47,000 deaths yearly** in the United States (US), and is currently the third leading cause of cancer-related death nationwide. NA communities have a **higher incidence of PDAC** than US Whites and the **worst survival outcomes** for PDAC among all major US racial/ethnic groups. Therefore, it is imperative that NA groups **understand their increased risk, take the proper precautions, and know the signs and symptoms to look out for.**

What exactly is pancreatic cancer?

Where is the pancreas located and what does it do?

- The **pancreas** is a gland, about six inches long, surrounded by the stomach, small intestine, liver, spleen, and gallbladder.
- The pancreas is made up of **two types of cells** that perform two important functions: **exocrine cells** produce enzymes that help digest food and **endocrine cells** that produce hormones to help regulate blood sugar.



What is pancreatic cancer?

- Pancreatic cancer happens when cells in the pancreas begin to **grow uncontrollably** and form a tumor.
- There are **different types of pancreatic cancer**, depending on the type of cells that are affected (exocrine cells vs endocrine cells).

Watch Mayo Clinic Surgical Oncologist, Dr. Chee-Chee Stucky explain pancreatic cancer in more depth [here!](#)

What can you do to reduce your risk?

Diabetes, obesity, and smoking are risk factors for developing pancreatic cancer. Here are some helpful tips for reducing your pancreatic cancer risk.

- If you have diabetes, work with your doctor to help manage and navigate it
- Take steps to manage your weight
- Eat vegetables, fruits, whole grains and legumes daily
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day
- Avoid using commercial tobacco

What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people do not have signs and symptoms in the early stages of pancreatic cancer. When symptoms appear, they may include:

- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Changes in stool (oily or watery)
- Recent-onset diabetes
- Abdominal or mid-to-upper back pain
- Unexplained weight loss
- Nausea/loss of appetite

What are the screening recommendations?

For people who are at average risk of pancreatic cancer, no major professional groups currently recommend routine screening.

- This is because no screening test has been shown to lower the risk of dying from this cancer.

For people in families at high risk of pancreatic cancer, newer tests for detecting pancreatic cancer early may help.

- The two most common tests used are an endoscopic ultrasound or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI).

All that in mind...

Pancreatic cancer is hard to find early. It is important to be aware of one's risk of pancreatic cancers and to know the signs and symptoms to look out for. Moreover, it is pivotal for NA communities to know how to reduce their risk.

It is natural to feel scared or anxious about cancer, but it is also beneficial to learn more about it and to be proactive about your health.

***Your health is sacred.
Please learn the signs and symptoms to look out for and encourage your relatives to do the same!***