

# Cancer in Canada

*A snapshot of this country's most feared disease* GIANCARLO LA GIORGIA

It's one of the words you hope to never hear from your doctor: cancer. How much do you know about the prevalence of one of the most common illnesses affecting Canadians? Here are some statistics.



**HEAVY TOLL** An estimated 166,400 new cases of cancer and 73,800 deaths from cancer will occur in Canada in 2008. The most frequently diagnosed cancer in women will continue to be breast cancer; for men it will be prostate cancer. Lung cancer remains the leading cause of cancer death for both sexes.

**COMMON KILLER** On the basis of current incidence rates, 40% of Canadian women and 45% of men will develop cancer during their lifetimes. Approximately one out of every four Canadians will die from malignant disease.

**SMOKING SECTIONS** Lung cancer incidence and mortality rates are lowest in British Columbia. They are higher in New Brunswick and Quebec (with the exception of female cancer mortality rates in New Brunswick) — owing mainly to the historically widespread use of tobacco in Eastern Canada.

**LETHAL HABIT** Almost 30% of cancer incidence and deaths in Canada — particularly lung cancer, one of the most preventable types — are due to tobacco use. Exposure to tobacco also increases the risk of cancers of the bladder, cervix, colon, rectum, esophagus, kidney, larynx, lung, mouth and pancreas.

**WASTED POTENTIAL** Smoking is responsible for about one-third of the potential years of life lost because of cancer.

**LAY OFF THE LARD** About 20% of fatal malignancies, especially colon and prostate cancers, are associated with diets high in fat.



**BRIGHTER FUTURE** Approximately 850 Canadian children ages 14 and under develop cancer each year. Thanks to medical advances, however, the number of deaths is just one-sixth the number of cases.

**WAYWARD WHITE CELLS** Leukemia accounts for 26% of new cancer cases and 28% of cancer deaths in children. It remains the most common childhood malignancy.

**SMEAR CAMPAIGNS** Regular screening for cervical cancer with the Pap smear has reduced incidence and mortality rates by about 50% and 60%, respectively, since 1977.

**SCREENING SAVES** Nearly one-third of breast cancer deaths could be prevented if most women ages 50 to 69 were regularly screened with mammograms and clinical breast examinations. Nationally, only 34% of women participate in organized screening programs.

**GOOD NEWS** The five-year relative survival for breast cancer at the national level (excluding Quebec) was 86% for women diagnosed from 1996 to 1998.

**EVEN BETTER NEWS** Excluding lung cancer, mortality rates for all cancers in women have dropped by 20% since 1979. 

