

Cancer incidence data show improving trend

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Preventable risk factors account for 65 percent of all cancer cases in Alabama, according to "Alabama's Cancer Facts & Figures 2003," the first annual report of the Alabama Statewide Cancer Registry produced in collaboration with the American Cancer Society. This 50-page report compiles cancer incidence data for cases diagnosed between 1996 and 2000, and is the first report that provides rates age-adjusted using the recommended year 2000 standard population.

Trends noted include a decrease in cancers among females of nearly 9 percent and in males of nearly 13 percent over a five-year period. Modifiable risk factors that lead to cancer include tobacco use, diet, obesity and sedentary lifestyle, which account for 65 percent of all cancers. A variety of factors including viruses, growth and reproductive, alcohol, socioeconomic status, environmental pollution and radiation, prescription drugs/medical procedures, and food additives/salt/contaminants represent 25 percent of cancers. Occupational factors account for 5 percent of cancers, while family history accounts for 5 percent of cases.

This publication provides county-specific rates by race and sex for the most commonly diagnosed cancers and those for which public health interventions exist. These cancers are lung, colon/rectum, female breast, prostate, cervix, oral and melanoma.

These data were compiled by the Alabama Statewide Cancer Registry which relies on hospital cancer registrars, physicians and others to report cancer cases. The registry is maintained in the Chronic Disease Prevention Division of the Bureau of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease, Alabama Department of Public Health.

The North American Association of Central Cancer Registries awarded silver certification to Alabama's registry for the first time in 2003. This association recognizes population-based cancer registries that have achieved excellence in completeness, quality and timeliness.

The publication can be viewed on the Alabama Department of Public Health Web site at www.adph.org/cancer_registry. For more information contact Reda Wilson, M.P.H., R.H.I.T., C.T.R., director at 334-206-5552, e-mail rwilson@adph.state.al.us or the American Cancer Society at 1-800-ACS-2345, www.cancer.org.

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