

Hey Philly! The American Cancer Society and the City of Philadelphia Urge People to Get Screened for Cancer

Independence Blue Cross Foundation and Partners Across Philadelphia Lead a Citywide Effort to Save More Lives

PHILADELPHIA, Sept. 29, 2022 /[PRNewswire](#)/ -- Today, the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the City of Philadelphia will kick off a citywide *Get Screened Philly* initiative to encourage residents to put their health first by prioritizing and scheduling age-appropriate screenings for breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, and prostate cancer. Cancer remains the second leading cause of death in Philadelphia. The *Get Screened Philly* initiative aims to increase cancer screening rates by raising awareness about the importance of recommended screenings and helping people catch up with their regular screening tests.

The campaign is part of the American Cancer Society's national movement to increase cancer screening rates and is generously supported by Independence Blue Cross Foundation, health systems and organizations throughout Philadelphia and the surrounding area. The COVID-19 pandemic initially resulted in 22 million individuals having elective procedures and cancer screenings being canceled or put on hold.

The ACS, alongside multiple partners, will be working to increase cancer screening rates swiftly and dramatically to pre-pandemic levels and advance health equity in Philadelphia. This includes a citywide public awareness campaign and screening summit, convening health systems, public health groups, professional organizations, patient advocacy groups, roundtables, businesses, government, and other key individual leaders to further improve screening rates. The screening summit will take place today at the Marriot Philadelphia, following a press conference this morning at City Hall.

A recent study by American Cancer Society researchers, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Open Network was the first of its kind to evaluate the impact of COVID-19 on cancer screenings. The study showed further evidence of how critical it is to support individuals catching up with their regular screening tests following COVID-19, by reporting the number of individuals in the United States who reported having a recent screening (in the past year) having dropped by 2.13 million (6%) for breast cancer and 4.47 million (11%) for cervical cancer screening in 2020 compared to 2018. The study also found that between 2018 and 2020 colonoscopies for colorectal cancer detection in the past year dropped by 16% for both men and women but was offset by an increase in stool testing of 7%. Delays in screening for breast, cervical, colorectal, prostate, and lung cancers could lead to cancers that are undiagnosed, untreated, and present at advanced stages, which makes them harder to treat.

"Research shows that delays and drops in cancer screening will lead to cancers that are diagnosed in later stages, making them harder to treat. The *Get Screened Philly* campaign is a collaborative and intense effort to get us back on track, and will certainly have a lifesaving impact," said Dr. Karen Knudsen, American Cancer Society Chief Executive Officer. "Screening is an integral and effective part of the ACS overarching goal to improve the lives of cancer patients and their families, ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to prevent, detect, treat, and survive cancer."

Philadelphia's Health Commissioner, Dr. Cheryl Bettigole said, "We encourage all Philadelphians to get the screenings they need to stay healthy and to catch problems early, while they can be treated more easily. Fortunately, Philadelphia has some of the best health care in the world, including a network of city health centers and federally qualified health centers that provide access to high quality, affordable care, regardless of health insurance status or ability to pay. Our new [primary care finder](#) can help city residents to navigate these systems. Please help share the word with relatives, friends, and neighbors."

"This is an important time to support and promote access to potentially life-saving screenings in our region. That's why we're excited to play our part in the *Get Screened Philly* campaign" said Heather Major, Executive Director of the Independence Blue Cross Foundation. "Through partnerships like this one with the American Cancer Society, we can impact the health of communities in meaningful ways."

The *Get Screened Philly* initiative will also support regional and local consortia, materials for health care systems to utilize in improving screening rates, and interventions to improve health equity in under-resourced communities. Pandemic-related disruptions have already exacerbated existing disparities in cancer screening and are likely to impact survival across groups of people who have systemically experienced social or economic obstacles to screening and care.

The *Get Screened Philly* campaign is supported by Independence Blue Cross Foundation, City of Philadelphia, AmeriHealth Caritas, Jefferson Heath, Sydney Kimmel Cancer Center, Penn Medicine, MD Anderson at Cooper, SEPTA, UE Life Sciences, KDI Technologies, ACME, UE Life Sciences, Genentech, Comcast, 6abc, Univision65, and Audacy.

For more information about cancer screening, please visit cancer.org/get-screened.

The American Cancer Society is on a mission to free the world from cancer. We invest in lifesaving research, provide 24/7 information and support, and work to ensure that individuals in every community have access to cancer prevention, detection, and treatment. For more information, visit cancer.org.

SOURCE American Cancer Society

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