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Cancer facts from *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2013*

In 2013:

- An estimated 48,700 new cancer cases will be diagnosed Quebec (187,600 in Canada) – not including the cases non-melanoma skin cancer.
- Cancer will cause an estimated 20,200 deaths (75,500 in Canada).
- More than half (52%) of newly diagnosed cases will involve prostate, lung, breast or colorectal cancers.
- Nearly 88% of new cancer cases and 95% of cancer-related deaths in Canada will occur among people aged 50 and older.
- In Canada, the largest proportion of new cancer cases (28%) will occur among people aged 60 to 69 years; and the largest proportion of cancer deaths (34%) among people aged 80 years or more.
- The number of new cancer cases in Canada will continue to rise steadily with population growth and ageing.
- The 5-year relative survival rate for all types of cancer as a whole is about 63%. In the 1940s, it hovered around 25%.

Breast cancer

- Breast cancer remains the most frequently diagnosed form of the disease among women.
- Eight out of ten breast cancer cases occur among women aged 50 years or more. One out of nine women is at risk of developing the disease. Among women, it is the most frequent form of cancer and the second-deadliest, after lung cancer.
- In 2013, an estimated 6,000 women in Quebec (23,800 in Canada) will be diagnosed with breast cancer. About 1,350 women (5,000 in Canada) will die of the disease.
- The breast cancer death rate in women has been dropping since the mid 1980s and has dropped by nearly 40% since its peak in 1986. This is likely due to a combination of increased mammography screening and improved treatment.
- The 5-year relative survival rate for breast cancer is considered to be very good and is about 88%.

Prostate cancer

- Prostate cancer is the most frequently diagnosed form of the disease among men.
- In 2013, an estimated 4,800¹ men in Quebec (23,600 in Canada) will be diagnosed with prostate cancer and about 860 (3,900 in Canada) will die of the disease.
- The incidence rate of prostate cancer has levelled off and the mortality rate declined.
- Forty percent of prostate cancer cases are diagnosed among men aged 60 to 69.
- One out of seven men is at risk of developing prostate cancer.
- The 5-year relative survival rate for prostate cancer is 96%.

¹ Underestimate of the number of cases for the years used to generate the 2012 estimates. This remark applies particularly to prostate cancer, melanoma, and bladder cancer.

Lung cancer

- Lung cancer is the leading cancer-related cause of death, both among men and women. In Quebec, it kills twice as many women as breast cancer and four times as many men as prostate cancer.
- In 2013, an estimated 7,800 or so men and women in Quebec (25,500 Canadians) will be diagnosed with lung cancer and about 6,300 (20,200 in Canada) will die of the disease.
- About 85% of lung cancer cases are due to smoking. The remaining 15% of cases are due to exposure to radon, secondhand smoke, asbestos, and air pollution, lung disease, family history of lung cancer, and exposure to certain chemical products in the workplace.
- In women:
 - The incidence rate rose by 1.1% a year from 1998 to 2007, and has since levelled off. The death rate for the same period rose slightly by 0.7% a year.
- In men:
 - The rise in the incidence and death rates associated with lung cancer began to level off in the mid 1980s, following several decades of increase, and have been dropping ever since.
 - Since 1998, the incidence and death rates have dropped by 1.8% and 2.3% a year, respectively.

The differences in the results between men and women are due to reduced smoking rates. Smoking rates among men began to drop in the 1960s and among women in the 1980s.

- For lung cancer, the 5-year relative survival rate is only 17%.

Colorectal cancer

- Colorectal cancer makes a major impact on mortality in men and women, accounting for 12% of all cancer deaths in Quebec and the rest of Canada (it is the second-leading cause of death overall).
- In 2013, an estimated 6,300 or so men and women in Quebec (23,800 in Canada) will be diagnosed with colorectal cancer and about 2,450 (9,200 in Canada) will die of the disease.
- Death rates continue to drop among men and women. The drop is likely due to improved treatment, such as chemotherapy, and the more frequent use of increasingly accessible screening tests.
- The 5-year relative survival rate for colorectal cancer is about 65%.

Liver cancer: special topic in *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2013*

- Liver cancer is one of the fastest-rising cancers in Canada.
- While liver cancer is still considered a rare form of the disease (accounting for an estimated 1% of all new cancer diagnoses and deaths in 2013), its incidence rate has tripled in men and doubled in women nationwide since 1970.
 - From 1970 to 2007, there was an average annual increase of 3.6% in liver cancer incidence among men. In women, there was an annual average increase of 1.7%.
- The liver cancer death rate is also on the rise:
 - In the recent period from 1991 to 2009, it increased by 2.5% a year among men. In women, the average annual death rate rose by 1.8% between 1994 and 2009.
- In 2013, it is estimated that more than 2,000 Canadians – 1,550 men and 490 women – will be diagnosed with liver cancer. It is estimated that about 1,000 people nationwide – 780 men and 240 women² will die of the disease.³

Survival

- Based on estimates for 2006-08, the 5-year relative survival rate for liver cancer in Canada is 20%.

² The sum of the number of men and women may not match the total indicated since figures have been rounded off.

³ In 2007, in Quebec, the number of diagnosed cases is 405 and the number of deaths, 448.

Prevalence

- In January 2009, an estimated 2,985 people in Canada (2,242 men and 743 women) who had been diagnosed with primary liver cancer in the previous 10 years were still alive.

Diagnosis and treatment

- In most cases, liver cancer symptoms do not appear until very late in the course of the disease.
- People with liver cancer often present with large, late-stage tumours that are generally incurable.
- People with liver cancer may present with symptoms such as jaundice, abdominal swelling, weight loss, night sweats, fatigue or abdominal pain.
- Depending on the stage of the cancer and the health of the liver, treatment may include surgery to remove the tumour, radiofrequency ablation, chemoembolization, chemotherapy or liver transplantation.

Liver cancer risk factors

Chronic hepatitis B and C infection are the main risk factors for liver cancer. Heavy alcohol use, obesity, diabetes, and smoking also increase the risk of liver cancer.

Hepatitis B and C

- Hepatitis B and C are both viral infections that cause inflammation of the liver. Chronic infection with hepatitis B or C damages the liver, which can eventually lead to liver cancer.
- About 10% of people infected with hepatitis B become chronic carriers of the virus.
- About 75-85% of people infected with hepatitis C become chronic carriers of the virus. Many people infected with hepatitis B or C are not aware of their infection.
- Rising liver cancer rates in Canada may be due to increasing immigration of persons chronically infected with hepatitis B or C from areas of the world where these infections are more common.
- Also, the spread of infection may occur unknowingly (such as between household members for hepatitis B or among drug users for hepatitis C).
- The hepatitis B virus is commonly contracted through exposure to contaminated blood or body fluids between sexual partners, sharing injecting equipment among drug users, or among household members by sharing personal care articles such as razors, scissors, nail clippers or toothbrushes with an infected person. The virus can also be transmitted from mother to child during birth.
- Most hepatitis C infection is spread through contact with contaminated blood.

Heavy alcohol use, obesity, diabetes, and smoking

- In the United States and parts of Europe, more than half of liver cancer cases are not linked to hepatitis B or hepatitis C, which suggests that other risk factors may be involved. These include alcohol-related cirrhosis of the liver, fatty liver disease caused by obesity, diabetes, and smoking.

Other potential liver cancer risk factors

- Occupational exposure to vinyl chloride or PCBs
- Metabolic diseases resulting in abnormal liver deposits (such as hereditary hemochromatosis and alpha-antitrypsin deficiency)
- Primary biliary cirrhosis
- Exposure to aflatoxin (a carcinogenic toxin produced by an agricultural fungus, typically found in developing countries)

Reducing the risk of liver cancer

Canadians can do a number of things to reduce the risk of contracting liver cancer.

- Protect against hepatitis infection: chronic infection with hepatitis B or C virus increases the risk of developing liver cancer.
 - People can get vaccinated for hepatitis B if they have not already done so. There is no vaccine for hepatitis C, but research to develop a vaccine is in progress.
- Practise safe sex.
- Don't share needles or other drug-use equipment.
- Seek treatment for hepatitis infection:
 - Treatment of chronic hepatitis B infection can reduce the infected person's viral load, potentially diminishing the risk of liver cancer.
 - Treatment of chronic hepatitis C infection can reduce and, in some cases, eliminate the virus completely.
- Limit alcohol use. Do not smoke. Be physically active and maintain a healthy body weight.

Other trends noted in the *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2013*

- The rising incidence of **kidney cancer** may be explained in part by the growing prevalence of obesity among Canadians as well as smoking.
- The rising incidence of **thyroid cancer** – the most rapidly increasing form of cancer – may be due to exposure to an unknown risk factor or the result of more frequent use of diagnostic testing that detects earlier-stage cancers more effectively than in the past. Survival rates for thyroid cancer is very high at 98%, which suggests that the disease can be controlled – as is the case for testicular cancer (97%).

Good news concerning other forms of cancer

- **Cervical cancer** incidence and deaths rates have been declining for several years, largely due to widespread and regular screening with the Pap test. Immunization against HPV is expected to reduce cervical cancer incidence and death rates even further.
- **Larynx cancer** incidence and deaths rates have been dropping, likely due to decreasing smoking and alcoholism rates.
- **Stomach cancer** incidence and death rates are dropping in both men and women. This may be due to changes in diet, decreasing smoking rates, and more frequent screening and treatment of the *H. pylori* bacterium, which is associated with stomach cancer.

The *Canadian Cancer Statistics 2013* report was prepared by the Canadian Cancer Society in collaboration with the Public Health Agency of Canada, Statistics Canada, provincial and territorial cancer registries.

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