

Cancer diagnoses rates fell by half during US lockdown

August 4 2020



The drop in diagnoses rates was particularly stark for breast cancer, which fell 51.8 percent during the lockdown compared to previous levels

The number of cancers diagnosed weekly in the United States fell by almost fifty percent during March and April compared to the recent average, a study said Tuesday, the latest to examine the impacts of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Emergency room visits additionally appear to have dropped for heart attacks, strokes and even appendicitis—trends that are being confirmed through ongoing studies.

Child vaccinations have also stalled globally, according to the UN, and world health bodies are alarmed by the impact on the fight against HIV, malaria and tuberculosis as screening campaigns, logistics and access to [health care](#) have been disrupted.

The new analysis, published in *JAMA Network Open*, established a baseline period from January 2019 to February 2020 to determine the average weekly number of cancers diagnosed by six types: breast, colorectal, lung, pancreatic, gastric and esophageal.

"During the pandemic, the weekly number fell 46.4% (from 4,310 to 2,310) for the 6 cancers combined, with significant declines in all cancer types," the authors found.

The drop was particularly stark for [breast cancer](#), with diagnoses rates falling 51.8 percent.

"While residents have taken to social distancing, cancer does not pause," wrote the authors, from Quest Diagnostics, a laboratory company.

"The delay in diagnosis will likely lead to presentation at more advanced stages and poorer clinical outcomes."

They also cited a new estimate from another study, which has not yet

been peer reviewed, that estimates that the delays will cause some 34,000 excess cancer deaths in the United States.

The Netherlands has seen as much as a 40 percent decline in weekly cancer incidence, and the United Kingdom has experienced a 75 percent decline in referrals for suspected cancer since restrictions were put in place.

"More recently, we are seeing some signs that screening rates are recovering some," added Laura Makaroff of the American Cancer Society, who was not involved in the study.

"The local impact of COVID is still highly variable across the country so it is important to talk with your [health care provider](#) about which screening tests are right for you and how to re-engage in screening in a safe way."

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