



THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF MILITARY AND VETERAN AFFAIRS



OFFICE OF DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND BELONGING



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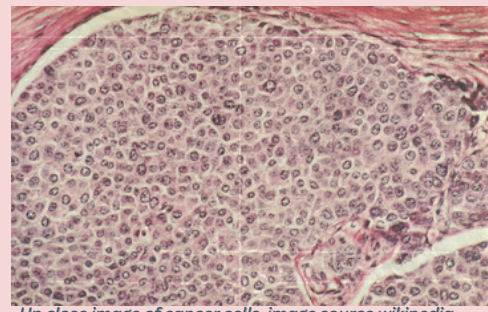
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National Cancer Prevention Month



Up close image of cancer cells, image source [wikipedia](https://www.wikipedia.org)

Over two million people in the United States will receive a Cancer diagnosis this year. Cancer is a complex condition that can effect many different parts of the body and anyone at any age. Cancer is caused by alterations on genetic level that affect how our cells grow and divide. These changes can happen due to errors in cell division, damage from environmental factors or substances, like tobacco smoke or Ultraviolet Radiation, or they can come from inherited mutations. The body can eliminate cells with damaged DNA under normal circumstances, but this ability decreases with age, which is why cancer risk increases as we get older. Each cancer has a unique set of genetic changes, and even within the same tumor (a mass of abnormal cells), different cells may have different mutations. For a visualization of the cancer process, check out this [video from the Cancer Center](#).

Cancer cells grow uncontrollably and don't respond to signals that normally stop cell division or trigger cell death. Unlike normal cells, they don't mature into specialized cell types, continuing to divide rapidly. Cancer cells can also influence nearby normal cells, prompting them to form new blood vessels that feed the tumor. These cells can evade the immune system, allowing tumors to grow unchecked. As they keep dividing, cancer cells invade surrounding tissues and can spread to other body parts, a process called metastasis, which is different from benign tumors that stay localized. Doctors use several methods to detect and diagnose cancer. Laboratory tests, such as blood or urine tests, can reveal abnormal levels of certain substances, though abnormal results don't always indicate cancer. Imaging tests like CT scans, MRIs, ultrasounds, PET scans, and X-rays help detect tumors. Biopsies are typically used for a definitive diagnosis, where a small tissue sample is removed and examined under a microscope. The sample can be taken through a needle, surgery, or a tube with a camera inserted into the body.

Being Cancer Conscious



Tobacco use is linked directly to 12 different forms of Cancer. Smoking can cause cancer in the mouth, throat, abdominal regions, respiratory system and kidneys. Chewing tobacco can also cause cancer within the mouth, pancreas, and esophagus. Even secondhand smoke has been linked to cancer, so smoking doesn't just effect yourself. According to the CDC, tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States resulting in 480,000 deaths each year.



Solar radiation is classified as a human carcinogen, meaning it has the potential to cause cancer. Sunlight emits ultraviolet (UV) rays, which are a form of radiation. UV lamps and tanning beds can emit the same type of light. To protect yourself, be proactive about using sunscreen whenever you're outdoors for extended periods, even in winter. Overexposure to UV rays can be linked to skin cancers such as melanoma, squamous cell carcinoma, and basal cell carcinoma.



Maintaining a healthy diet can help reduce the risk of developing cancer. Red meats like pork, beef, and venison have been linked to colorectal cancer, while many processed foods contain nitrates and nitrites, which may increase the risk of stomach cancer. Alcohol consumption has been associated with a higher risk of pancreatic and liver cancers, and some studies suggest a connection between artificial sweeteners and cancer as well.



Cancer screening is a crucial tool in detecting cancer early, often before symptoms appear, when treatment is most effective. Regular screenings for cancers such as breast, prostate, and colon can help identify potential risks and catch cancers at an earlier, more treatable stage. Early detection through screening can significantly improve outcomes and survival rates by allowing for prompt intervention.

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The VA's National Oncology Program offers comprehensive cancer care for veterans, focusing on prevention, treatment, and survivorship. It ensures coordinated care, addresses health disparities, and provides access to advanced treatments, clinical trials, and support services to improve outcomes and quality of life. To learn more, visit www.cancer.va.gov or scan the QR code to see their full brochure!



The VA has a host of resources available to veterans who wish to quit smoking. Scanning the QR code will take you directly to 'Stay Quit Coach', the VA's interactive app for quitting tobacco. The VA also has QUIT VEI, their tobacco hotline. Dial 1-855-784-8838 to help build your tobacco quitting plan. More resources and workbooks are available on their [webpage](#).



The Demographics of Cancer

Cancer disproportionately impacts various demographics due to factors such as gender, age, and structural inequalities in resource distribution, equity, and systemic racism, as highlighted by a [2024 study from the American Cancer Society](#). Aside from certain skin cancers, breast cancer is the most prevalent form of cancer in the United States. In 2025, an estimated 316,950 new cases of invasive cancer are expected to be diagnosed in women, with one in three new cancer diagnoses in women being breast cancer. In 2024, nearly 300,000 new cases of prostate cancer were diagnosed, primarily among men, with African American men experiencing a prostate cancer incidence rate 70% higher than that of white men. Inequitable access to healthcare has contributed to higher cancer mortality rates for African American men and Indigenous (AIAN) populations. Despite lower incidence rates, African American women have a breast cancer mortality rate 40% higher than their white counterparts. On a cellular level, psychological stress leads to biochemical changes, such as elevated cortisol levels, which contribute to chronic inflammation, raising the risk of cancer. Minority groups and the LGBTQ+ communities may be particularly vulnerable due to the societal and structural pressures they face as marginalized individuals. These stressors can worsen mental health, leading some individuals to turn to substances like smoking or alcohol, further increasing cancer risk. For more information on how cancer affects different demographics, please click [here](#)!

Women in our armed forces are 40% more likely to develop breast cancer than the civilian population. 700 veterans are diagnosed with breast cancer each year. The National Breast Cancer Foundation has launched the [Military Women's Patient Relief Fund](#) to help veterans with transportation and Childcare costs, housing stability, and finances for veterans in need. For more information please scan the QR code

CONNECTED THROUGH CARE

The USO has a long history of supporting its troops through the delivery of care packages. Since its founding, the organization has put much effort into sending essential items to soldiers stationed away from home and around the world. Today, large donation drives and events are held to collect such essentials and other fun goodies to provide a sense of comfort in unfamiliar circumstances. In 2023, nearly 270,000 care packages were delivered in 72 countries.

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A COMMUNITY FOR ALL

The USO is dedicated to adhering diversity and inclusion by making sure that its programs and services are accessible to all service members, regardless of background or identity. Acknowledging the acceptance within today's military, the USO works to create an environment where all members can feel seen and represented. This can include offering culturally inclusive events and supporting underrepresented groups. Through its outreach and programming, the USO aspires to build a sense of belonging for service members and their families. Upholding that sense of union within diversity strengthens the military community as a whole.

A HOME AWAY FROM HOME

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The USO has a global presence, with locations spanning across multiple continents to support military members and their families. Facilities can be found in major cities, military bases, and even in airports, providing a welcoming space for service members traveling alone or with family. These centers offer essential services from free Wi-Fi, snacks, and a place to relax, to ensuring troops feel connected and supported no matter where they are. With over 250 global locations, the USO plays an important role in boosting morale and offering a sense of comfort during long deployments or layovers. Whether they are stationed overseas or passing through an airport, the USO is there to make service members feel at home.



USO DAY



USO DAY ON FEBRUARY 4TH IS THE ANNUAL CELEBRATION OF THE AMERICAN NONPROFIT-CHARITABLE CORPORATION, THE UNITED SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS INC. THE CREATION OF THE USO CAME DURING AN IMPACTFUL TIME PERIOD IN AMERICAN HISTORY TO SUPPORT MILITARY MEMBERS DURING WORLD WAR II AND ONWARD. THE DAY WAS OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZED TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE EFFORTS OF THE USO IN PROVIDING INCLUSIVE PROGRAMS, ENTERTAINMENT, AND SUPPORT TO SERVICE MEMBERS AND THEIR FAMILIES. FROM ITS HUMBLE BEGINNINGS, THE USO HAS GROWN INTO A SYMBOL OF AMERICAN GRATITUDE AND UNITY, WITH THIS DAY SERVING AS A REMINDER OF THE SACRIFICES MADE BY THOSE WHO SERVE AND THOSE WHO SUPPORT THEM.

*DMAVA DEIB DISCLAIMER

LIGHTS, CAMERAS, ACTION!

The USO has a long-standing tradition of providing entertainment for troops, dating back to World War II, when celebrities and performers volunteered to lift the spirits of soldiers stationed overseas by singing and dancing. Iconic figures like Marilyn Monroe became synonymous with USO shows, performing for troops in war zones and helping maintain uplifted spirits during difficult times. Women, in particular, have played a crucial role, with singers that captivated audiences with their patriotic songs, to dancing and conversing with soldiers at events. These performances served as a vital reminder to soldiers of the gratitude and support they were receiving from back home.

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FOR THE FAMILIES

The USO offers a variety of programs aimed at supporting military children and spouses, recognizing the unique and often overlooked challenges they face. For military kids, the USO provides activities like camps and educational programs that help them build connections with others their age that are experiencing similar situations. Spouses also benefit from the USO's support through resources, career development, and opportunities for personal connection. These programs create a sense of community and belonging, helping families navigate the emotional and practical sides of military life, whether it's during a deployment or frequent relocations.

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A RECOLLECTION OF THE PAST

The USO is known for organizing reenactments of significant historical events, including World War II, to honor the sacrifices of veterans and educate the public. These reenactments often take place at military bases, events, and museums, where actors recreate pivotal moments from history. By showcasing these events, the USO aims to bring history to life, allowing audiences to better understand the emotional and physical toll of situations like war. Additionally, these performances help preserve the stories of those who lived through these historic moments ensuring future generations remain connected to the past.

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