

what's the BUZZ on cancer in unama'ki?

Health Information Bulletin #2

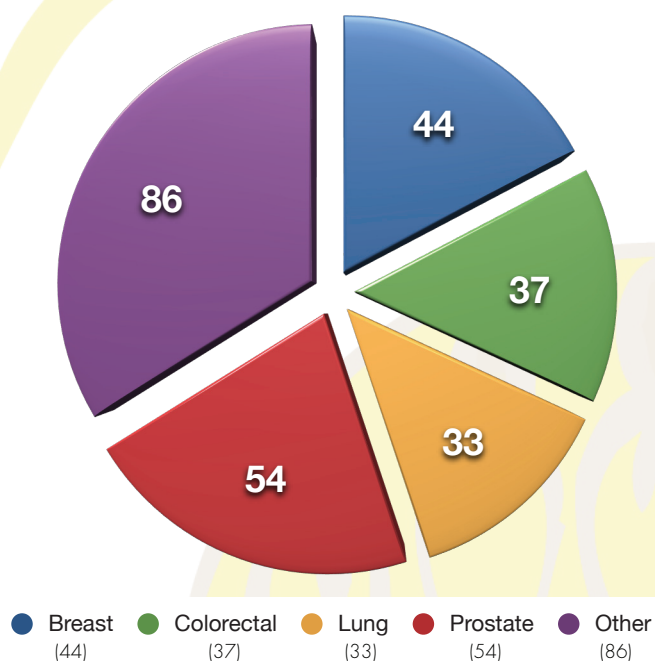


Inside this edition:

- *What do our cancer statistics tell us?*
- *Hundreds of us are BUZZED to beat cancer*
- *Higher rates of cancer, but not all bad news*
- *Increasing the odds for survival*

Between 2000 and 2009, 147 women and 107 men from our Unama'ki communities were diagnosed with cancer.

of people in Unama'ki diagnosed with cancer 2000-2009, by cancer type



Cancer rates in the Unama'ki communities are similar to the rest of Nova Scotia. The risk of dying from cancer is also about the same in our communities as the rest of the province. The four most common types of cancer are breast, prostate, colorectal and lung. This makes up two-thirds (66%) of all cancers among our people.

There is a lot we know about how cancer can be prevented. You can cut your chances of getting cancer by living a healthy lifestyle, especially not smoking. Eating the right foods, staying active and not polluting our environment are all things we need to do as individuals, families and communities.

There are also some simple screening tests that can find some cancers early, when treatment works best. Screening is about looking for cancer when you are feeling good and have no warning signs or symptoms. The sooner cancer is diagnosed, the more likely it can be treated and cured. Medical research has come a long way in helping doctors understand how to treat and cure the disease. Getting screened could save your life.

TUI'KN PARTNERSHIP
201 CHURCHILL DRIVE
MEMBERTOU, NS
CANADA B1S 0H1

T (902) 564-6466 EXT. 2820
F (902) 562-2068

The Unama'ki Client Registry was used to generate the statistics in this Health Bulletin. It is the second in a series of short profiles that highlight some key findings. This information can help us better understand and address the health needs of our people.

Finding cancer early can save your life!

Is the fear of finding out you have cancer stopping you from getting a simple, life-saving screening test?
If you have cancer, the earlier it's found, the better your chances.
Take the power back. This is a fight we can win.



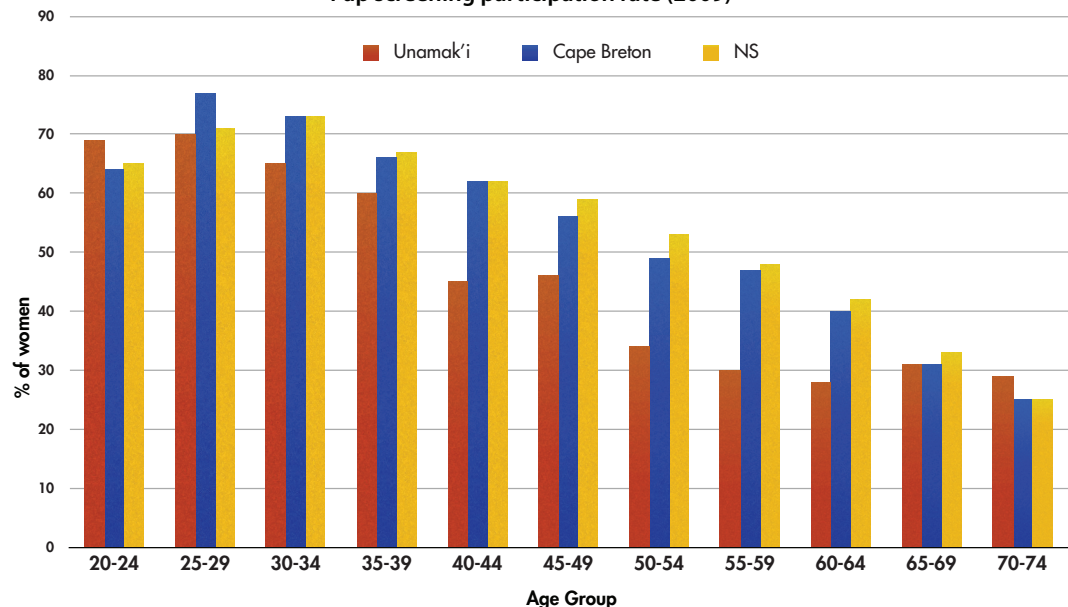
Rates of cancer in Nova Scotia and Cape Breton have typically been higher than the Canadian average. This is also true for First Nation people who live here. But the news isn't all bad. Many kinds of cancer can be prevented. There are also some simple screening tests you can get (some right in your doctor's office) to find cancer before you have warning signs or symptoms.

For women, **Pap tests** screen for **cervical cancer**. This simple test should be part of every woman's health plan from when they are young adults through to when they are seniors. In the Unama'ki communities, we're doing better than Cape Breton and Nova Scotia in our Pap testing rates for younger women (20-24 years old), but we need to do a better job of getting women 30+ years old to get regularly tested. Our rate is very low in women aged 40-44, where the number who get tested is 20% lower than the provincial average.

While **breast cancer** is far more common among women, anyone can develop it. A mammogram checks to see if you have breast cancer. The key to beating it, as with many other cancers, is to find it early.

Talk with your health provider to find out how often you should have cancer screening tests.

Pap screening participation rate (2009)



Screening can find cancer before you have symptoms.

Sometimes statistics raise more questions than answers. When you hear that rates of cancer are going up, it could mean that we are finding more cases of early stage disease because more people are getting screened. When we find it early, we can treat it better.

Colorectal screening (that looks for *cancer in the colon and rectum*) is important for women and men. Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in Nova Scotia. Every two years, all Nova Scotians between the ages 50-74 are mailed a home screening kit for colorectal cancer.

Most *lung cancer* is due to *smoking or second hand smoke*. Even if you have been a life-long smoker, it's never too late to quit. Within 1 to 9 months after quitting, your lungs begin to heal. The longer you go without smoking, the more your risk of developing lung cancer will decrease. If you already have cancer, quitting may improve the effects of treatments and the chances of recovery. Quitting also lowers the risk of developing a second cancer.

Most *skin cancer* is also preventable, just by using *sunscreen*, wearing a hat or finding shade. And it's a myth that if you have darker skin you have natural protection from the sun because you don't burn as easily. In fact, darker skinned people may not notice early stages of cancer as easily as someone with fair skin.

For men, there is a screening test for *prostate cancer*. In Unama'ki, the rate of this type of cancer is about 50% higher in our communities than expected, compared to other men from Cape Breton. We don't know if that means men in Unama'ki have a greater risk of getting prostate cancer, or if more of them are just being screened and treated early. The good news is that even though the number of men with prostate cancer is going up, death from the disease is not. The decision to be screened for this type of cancer should be made between a man and his health provider.

Nova Scotia has recently launched a province-wide colorectal cancer screening program.

Visit:

www.cancercare.ns.ca/coloncancerprevention

or call 1-866-2267
to learn more.

Buzzed to beat cancer

Nearly everyone in our communities has been affected by cancer in some way. In fact, 500 people in Unama'ki shaved their heads as part of the Buzz the Fuzz campaign in support of those living with the disease, and in memory of those we lost. *Way to go, everyone!*

Take THIS cancer test !

A healthy diet can protect against cancer. *TRUE!*

Breast cancer risk is higher among women whose close blood relatives have this disease. *TRUE!*

People with darker skin still need to protect themselves from the sun. *TRUE!*

The HPV vaccine can protect against cervical cancer. *TRUE!*

Colorectal screening is important for 50-74 year olds. *TRUE!*

It's never too late to quit smoking. *TRUE!*



Good information about the health of our communities can help us answer some difficult questions: How does our health compare with the rest of the province? How can we close the gap between our health and other Nova Scotians? How should we use our health care resources? What services will we need in the future?

Together with government and academic partners, we have created the Unama'ki Client Registry (UCR). It is a community-owned, locally-designed information system that allows us to link data from a variety of provincial sources. This is the first registry of its kind in Canada.

We have the highest standards of privacy protection. The registry has undergone a rigorous privacy impact assessment and there are extensive security safeguards in place to protect the information contained in it. The Unama'ki Client Registry does not contain names or addresses.

The Unama'ki Client Registry has put the strength of information into local hands. Before this, there was a lot we didn't know about the health of our people. We could not say with certainty how many suffered from heart disease or cancer, or how many women were regularly screened for cervical cancer. Now, we know these things and much more. Our health information gives us the power to negotiate with government and other partners for the services we need to improve the health of our people.

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We would like to thank Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Public Health Agency of Canada, and Nova Scotia Department of Health and Wellness for financial and in-kind support of the Tui'kn Partnership's efforts to improve access to timely and reliable population health information for our communities.

The information in this bulletin was generated by linking the Unama'ki Client Registry with the Nova Scotia Cancer Registry (NSCR) and the Provincial Cytology/Colposcopy Registry (PCCR). The NSCR and the PCCR are operated by Cancer Care Nova Scotia, a provincial program of the NS Department of Health and Wellness.



Tui'kn Partnership
Because health belongs to all of us.