

# Tongan Americans and Cancer “Wiki Alert”

‘Wiki’ is the Hawaiian term for “fast.” The intent of these “Wiki” Alerts is to provide brief informational resources about chronic disease issues that impact Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders.

## What is Cancer?

Cancer is the spread of abnormal cells throughout the body. If the spread is not controlled, cancer can lead to death. Cancer may be the result of either heredity or environmental factors such as chemicals, radiation, tobacco smoke, and viruses. Lifestyle choices such as alcohol and tobacco use, unprotected sun exposure, poor nutrition, and physical inactivity are also risk factors.

For the Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities, other factors like exposure to American culture, poverty, access to education, low cancer screening rates, late diagnosis, and lack of culturally sensitive educational and prevention programs continue to affect the occurrence of cancer and death rates.

## Cancer and Tongan Men

### Lung Cancer

- The second most common cancer in both U.S. men and women.
- One of the top two cancers among Pacific Islander men.
- Lung cancer affects 107 per every 100,000 Tongan men each year compared to the 89.2 per every 100,000 non-Hispanic white men each year.

### Prostate Cancer

- One of the most common types of cancer in men.
- Tends to develop in men over the age of 50.
- The occurrence rate of prostate cancer within Tongan men is 85 per 100,000 each year. About 30% of these men find out they have cancer at a late stage.

## Cancer and Tongan Women

### Breast Cancer

- The leading cancer for most female Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander communities.
- Studies have found breast cancer in 118 per every 100,000 Tongan women. Over a third of these occurrences were found at late stage of the cancer.

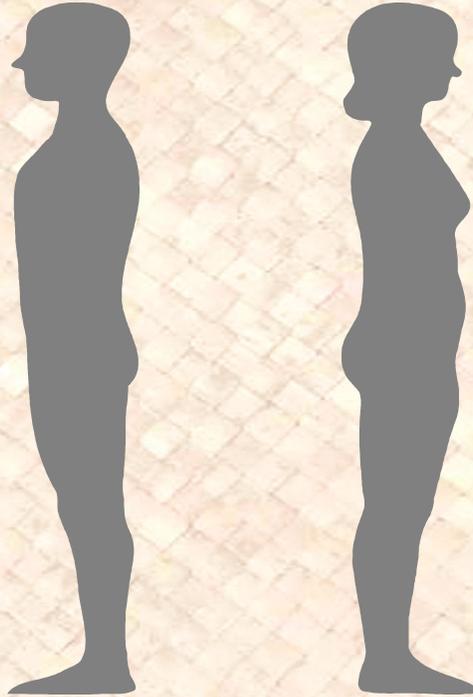
### Endometrium (Uterine) Cancer

- Forms in the lining of the uterus and is usually found in older women that no longer undergo their menstrual cycle.
- Occurrence rates among Tongan women are 91.2 per every 100,000 each year, which is the highest rate compared to 11 other Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander subgroups.

# Estimated U.S. Cancer Cases for Tongan Americans (2007)

Men: 766,860

Prostate	29%
Lung/Bronchus	15%
Colon/Rectum	10%
Urinary Bladder	7%
Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma	4%
Skin Melanoma	4%
Kidney	4%
Leukemia	3%
Oral cavity	3%
Pancreas	2%



Women: 678,060

Breast	26%
Lung/Bronchus	15%
Colon/Rectum	11%
Uterine Corpus	6%
Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma	4%
Skin Melanoma	4%
Thyroid	4%
Ovary	3%
Kidney	3%
Leukemia	3%

Ravenswood Family Health Center

R. Pinto PA-C, I. Quinonez

## Prevention and Detection

There are several prevention methods one can choose from to reduce the risks for cancer as well as other diseases linked to cancer like diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

- **Preventative vaccines** are equally important since they can prevent certain viruses from developing into cancers.
- **Changing certain lifestyle behaviors** can also reduce the risks for cancer. Therefore, regular exercise, the elimination of tobacco use, the use of sunscreen in sunlight, and daily consumption of fruits and vegetables should be practiced everyday.
- **Cancer screenings** are important since they can detect cancer early and prevent further health complications.

For copies, contact Taulama for Tongans at (650) 286-1500 and APIAHF at (415) 954-9999.

This wiki alert was developed in partnership with Taulama for Tongans and Asian & Pacific Islander American Health Forum.

**APIAHF**  
ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER  
AMERICAN HEALTH FORUM

