



ASIAN AMERICANS & CANCER

WHO WE ARE

“Asian American” refers to persons whose familial roots originate from many countries, ethnic groups and cultures of the Asian continent, including (but not limited to): Asian Indian, Bangladeshi, Bhutanese, Burmese, Cambodian, Chinese, Filipino, Hmong, Indonesian, Japanese, Korean, Laotian, Malayan, Mien, Nepalese, Pakistani, Sikh, Sri Lankan, Thai and Vietnamese. ⁽¹⁾ According to US Census Data, the Asian American population consists of these percentages of ethnicities: 23.8% Chinese, 20.4% Filipino, 12.3% Japanese, 11.8% Asian Indian, 11.6% Korean and 8.9% Vietnamese. ⁽¹⁾

Seventy percent of US Asians are immigrants who entered the US during one of three distinct immigration waves: before 1975, between 1975-1979, and 1980 or later. ⁽²⁾ Most Asian Americans who have arrived since 1965 still live in ten large metropolitan areas. In 1996, an estimated four in ten Asian Americans lived in California ⁽³⁾ These US Asian-born individuals emigrated from countries with the overall lowest breast cancer rates in the world. ^(4,5,6) Despite this fact, cancer has been the number one killer of Asian American women since 1980. ⁽⁷⁾ Further, Asian American females are the first American population to experience cancer as the leading cause of death. ⁽¹⁾

STATISTICAL CANCER FACTS FOR ASIAN AMERICANS

- ◆ Cancer is the leading cause of death for female Asian Americans. In fact, Asian American females are the first American population to experience cancer as the leading cause of death. ⁽¹⁾
- ◆ Cancer has been the number one killer of Asian American women since 1980. ⁽⁷⁾
- ◆ Cervical cancer is a significant health problem in Korean American women. ⁽⁸⁾
- ◆ Breast cancer incidence in Japanese American women is approaching that of US Whites. ⁽⁹⁾
- ◆ Forty-eight percent of Filipino and 41% of Korean women receive Pap smear tests within the recommended time. And 25% of Filipino and 38% of Korean women receive adequate and timely colorectal cancer screening. ⁽¹⁰⁾



These ICC Cancer Fact Sheets were updated through an educational grant from OrthoBiotech.



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- ◆ A major problem in Chinese women is that approximately 22% often use herbal remedies when diagnosed with breast cancer. ⁽¹¹⁾
- ◆ Some studies indicate that approximately 79% of Asian-born Asian American women with breast cancer have greater proportion of tumors larger than 1 cm at diagnosis. ⁽¹²⁾
- ◆ Young Asian women have lower participation in breast self examination (BSE) and pap tests. ⁽¹³⁾
- ◆ A significant number of Korean Americans have never heard of the Pap smear test. ⁽¹⁴⁾
- ◆ Southeast Asian women have higher invasive cervical cancer incidence rates and lower Pap testing frequencies than most other ethnic groups in the US. ⁽¹⁵⁾
- ◆ According to some studies, a large number of Vietnamese women cannot correctly explain what a Pap test is used for. ⁽¹⁶⁾
- ◆ The most commonly occurring cancer in Vietnamese females in the US is cervical cancer. ⁽¹⁶⁾
- ◆ Liver cancer, usually caused by exposure to the Hepatitis B virus, disproportionately affects Asian Americans. This is the reason why the third leading cancer among Asian Americans is liver cancer. ^(17,18)
- ◆ Cervical cancer incidence rates are five times higher among Vietnamese American women than White women. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ Cervical cancer is the number one incident cancer in Vietnamese women, whereas breast cancer is the number one incident cancer for all racial and ethnic groups. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ Vietnamese men have the highest rates of liver cancer for all racial/ethnic groups. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ The incidence of liver cancer in Chinese, Filipino, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese populations are 1.7 to 11.3 times higher than rates among White Americans. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ Korean men experience the highest rate of stomach cancer of all racial/ethnic groups, and a five-fold increased rate of stomach cancer over White American men. ⁽¹⁹⁾
- ◆ Approximately one-half of women who gave birth to Hepatitis B-carrier infants in the United States were foreign-born Asian women. ⁽²⁰⁾
- ◆ Lung cancer rates among Southeast Asians are 18% higher than among White Americans. ⁽²¹⁾
- ◆ Filipinos have the second poorest five-year survival rates for colon and rectal cancers of all US ethnic groups (second to American Indians). ⁽²²⁾
- ◆ Studies have found a higher density of tobacco billboards and store displays in Asian neighborhoods of many US cities. In San Diego, California, the highest number of tobacco displays is found in Asian American stores (6.4/store), compared to Latino (4.6/store) and African American stores (3.7/store), with the lowest number of store displays found in San Diego's White neighborhoods. ⁽²³⁾
- ◆ In 1990, 63.6% of Hmong people, 42.6% of Cambodians and 34.7 % of Lao people lived in poverty, compared to the total US poverty rate of 20%. They also suffered limited or no access to medical services due to lack of insurance. ⁽²⁴⁾

Additional facts and information on Asian American populations can be found at <http://iccnetwork.org/cancerfacts>

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