James Van Der Beek of Hit TV Series “Dawson’s Creek” Dies at 48 of Colorectal Cancer

A heartthrob of film and TV since the late 1990s, James Van Der Beek had announced in November 2024 that he had Stage 3 colorectal cancer.

February 11, 2026 By Laura Schmidt

UPDATE: Actor James Van Der Beek, who shot to stardom in late ’90s TV teen drama Dawson’s Creek, has died from colorectal cancer. He was 48. He is survived by his wife and six children.

“Our beloved James David Van Der Beek passed peacefully this morning,” wrote the family in a November 11 Instagram post.

View this post on Instagram

A post shared by James Van Der Beek (@vanderjames)

The Instagram post continues: “He met his final days with courage, faith, and grace. There is much to share regarding his wishes, love for humanity, and the sacredness of time. Those days will come. For now we ask for peaceful privacy as we grieve our loving husband, father, son, brother, and friend.”

In November 2024, Van Der Beek announced to the public that he had been diagnosed with Stage 3 colorectal cancer. The Varsity Blues star posted regularly on Instagram about his experiences with cancer and urged people to get screenings.

In related news, “Colorectal Cancer Is Now the Top Cancer Killer Among Younger Adults,” according to recent data from the American Cancer Society, although overall cancer death rates in people under 50 dropped 44% since 1990. For a collection of articles on this type of illness, click #Colon Cancer, and for more background, read the Cancer Health Basics “Colon Cancer 101.”

Below is our original article from November 2024 regarding Van Der Beek:

Actor James Van Der Beek announced via social media that he has been diagnosed with colorectal cancer.

The Dawson’s Creek star said he had planned to share his diagnosis with People magazine, but tabloids were ready to break the news early, prompting him to disclose his diagnosis to his 1.5 million Instagram followers.

“There’s no playbook for how to announce these things, but I’d planned on talking about it at length with People magazine at some point soon…to raise awareness and tell my story on my own terms,” the actor, 47, wrote on Instagram. “But that plan had to be altered early this morning when I was informed that a tabloid was going to run with the news.”



View this post on Instagram

A post shared by James Van Der Beek (@vanderjames)

“I’ve been dealing with this privately until now, getting treatment and dialing in my overall health with greater focus than ever before,” Van Der Beek wrote. “I’m in a good place and feeling strong. It’s been quite the initiation, and I’ll tell you more when I’m ready.”

Colon cancer is often grouped with rectal cancer and known as colorectal cancer. It develops when cells grow out of control in the colon or rectum, sections of the large intestine.

Colorectal cancer is the fourth most common cancer in the United states among men and women combined, according to the Colorectal Cancer Alliance. An estimated 152,000 Americans are diagnosed with colorectal annually, and more than 53,000 will die of the disease this year.

Rates of colorectal cancer have been increasing among younger people. An American Cancer Society analysis found that since 2011, rates increased by 2% per year in people younger than 50 as well as in those 50 to 54 years old.

The rate of colorectal cancer diagnoses has decreased annually since the mid-1980s thanks to advancements in screening rates and changing lifestyle-related factors such as obesity, smoking, diabetes, physical activity and more.

“There’s reason for optimism, and I’m feeling good," Van Der Beek told People, in a story the

magazine published later.

He also apologized to those close to him who learned of his diagnosis on Instagram.

“Apologies to all the people in my life who I’d planned on telling myself. Nothing about this process has occurred on my preferred timeline.… But we roll with it, taking each surprise as a signpost, pointing us toward a greater destiny than we would have discovered without divine intervention,” he wrote.

In December, watch Van Der Beek in The Real Full Monty, a two-hour special produced by Anthony Anderson that will feature a group of male celebrities stripping down to raise awareness of and reduce stigma around colorectal, prostate and testicular cancer.

Inspired by the award-winning 1997 film The Full Monty, the event will include Van Der Beek alongside actors Taye Diggs and Tyler Posey, Kansas City Chiefs defensive tackle Chris Jones and iconic Dancing With The Stars judge Bruno Tonioli.

To read more, click #Colorectal Cancer. There, you’ll find headlines such as “Colorectal Cancer Screening: Where Does the Shield Liquid Biopsy Fit In?,” “Why Your Flu Shot Might Come With a Colon Cancer Test” and “New Evidence for Aspirin Use to Lower Colorectal Cancer Risk.”

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http://beta.docker.cancerhealth.com/article/actor-james-van-der-beek-reveals-colorectal-cancer-diagnosis