Get Cancer Screenings Back on Track

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Cancer screenings have dropped precipitously due to the COVID-19 pandemic. One recent study showed that breast, colon, prostate and lung cancer screenings declined by 56% to 85%. Although rates have rebounded since the initial COVID-19 crisis, they remain below pre-pandemic levels.

As a result, doctors are seeing an uptick in later-stage cancer diagnoses. A study at last year's San Antonio Breast Cancer Symposium showed that more women presentedwith advanced-stage and aggressive breast cancer during the first two months of California's stay-at-home order. And a national survey by the American Society for Radiation Oncology found that new patients were coming in for radiation therapy with more advanced disease. In a Science magazine editorial last year, National Cancer Institute director Norman Sharpless, MD, estimated that reduced screening due to the pandemic and the resulting delays in diagnosis and treatment could lead to nearly 10,000 extra deaths from breast and colorectal cancer over the next decade.

That's why the nonprofit CancerCare and the Community Oncology Alliance (COA) launched the "Time to Screen" campaign. Health care facilities are following precautions to keep people safe, and screening does not put you at risk of contracting the coronavirus. "It's safer to get screened now, rather than delaying getting checked for cancer, because early detection catches cancer when it's most treatable," says COA president Kashyap Patel, MD. "It may even save your life." To learn more, go to TimeToScreen.org or call 855-530-SCREEN.

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