

Why Jerry Springer Kept His Cancer Diagnosis Private Until His Death

The “Grandfather of Trash TV” and a former politician, Jerry Springer died of pancreatic cancer. Here’s what to know about that illness.

May 3, 2023 By Laura Schmidt

Jerry Springer, the longtime television host and onetime mayor of Cincinnati, died last week at age 79 surrounded by family after quietly living with pancreatic cancer, a representative [told the Los Angeles Times](#).

“While the family knew the diagnosis, he preferred the larger public not know until his passing,” Jene Galvin, Springer’s friend and a spokesman for the family, said in a [statement](#) to the Los Angeles Times.

Springer was best known for hosting the long-running The Jerry Springer Show, which aired more than 4,000 episodes between 1991 and 2018. While countless criticisms lambasted the nationally syndicated show, Springer [told CNN](#) in 2010 that he didn’t mind being called the “grandfather of trash TV,” describing the tabloid-style show “an hour of escapism.”

Springer studied political science at Tulane University and later received a law degree from Northwestern. In 1971, Springer was elected to Cincinnati’s city council and served as mayor of from 1977 to 1978.

“Jerry’s ability to connect with people was at the heart of his success in everything he tried—whether that was politics, broadcasting or just joking with people on the street who wanted a photo or a word,” Galvin said in the statement. “He’s irreplaceable and his loss hurts immensely, but memories of his intellect, heart and humor will live on.”

Springer is among many other public figures who have died of pancreatic cancer, including actor Patrick Swayze, astronaut Sally Ride, Jeopardy! host [Alex Trebek](#) and former Supreme Court Justice [Ruth Bader Ginsburg](#).

In 2023, about 64,050 people will be diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and about 50,550 will die of the disease, according to the [American Cancer Society](#). Pancreatic cancer accounts for only about 3% of all cancers in the United States, but it is the fourth leading cause of cancer death in both women and men.

Springer's family asked that supporters consider making a charitable donation or perform an act of kindness in honor of his memory.

To read more about this type of cancer, click [#Pancreatic Cancer](#). There you'll find headlines such as "[Enjoying the Gift of Time After a Pancreatic Cancer Diagnosis](#)," "[World Traveler Books University of Colorado for Pancreatic Cancer Journey](#)" and "[Pancreatic Cancer Survivor Shares a Message of Hope \[VIDEO\]](#)."

Cancer Health's [Basics on Pancreatic Cancer](#) offers additional information. It reads in part:

What are the risk factors for pancreatic cancer?

About 25% of pancreatic cancers are related to tobacco smoking, with the risk rising with larger numbers of cigarettes and more years of smoking. About 15% of cases occur in people with a family history of pancreatic cancer. Obesity, certain genetic conditions, a history of chronic pancreatitis (inflammation of the pancreas) and heavy alcohol use (which can cause pancreatitis) also contribute to increased risk.

What are the symptoms of pancreatic cancer?

The pancreas, an organ that sits behind the stomach, produces enzymes that are released into the intestines to help digest food. Cells within the pancreas (known as islets of Langerhans) produce the hormones insulin and glucagon, which control blood sugar levels. Most pancreatic cancers are exocrine cancers in the ducts of the pancreas. About 5% are endocrine or neuroendocrine tumors, some of which produce hormones.

Cancer of the pancreas generally has no symptoms, making it difficult to detect at early stages, when it is easier to treat. Symptoms typically start once tumors have spread beyond the pancreas; these may include:

- Unexplained fatigue or weakness
- Pain in the upper abdomen
- Bloating or swollen abdomen
- Diarrhea or constipation
- Nausea or vomiting
- Loss of appetite
- Unexplained weight loss
- Jaundice (yellowing of the skin and eyes)
- Fever or chills
- Dark urine or pale stools.

How is pancreatic cancer diagnosed?

Early detection and treatment of cancer increases the likelihood of long-term survival. The process of diagnosis starts with a physical exam and medical history, including family history and how long symptoms have been present. The physical exam will check for abdominal swelling, swollen lymph nodes and other possible indicators. Blood and urine tests may be ordered for substances that could indicate cancer.

X-rays, computed tomography (CT), positron emission tomography (PET), MRI or ultrasound scans may be done to see how extensive the cancer is and how much it has spread. If a mass is detected, a small tissue sample (a biopsy) may be removed for examination in a laboratory.