

The Effects of Tobacco and Alcohol Use on Cancer: An American Indian/Alaskan Native Perspective

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American Indian
Cancer Foundation.

Overview

- Disparities in cancer incidence and outcomes
- Historical and cultural contexts of substance use and commercial tobacco use
- Reclaiming traditional tobacco
- Promising practices



American Indian Cancer Foundation

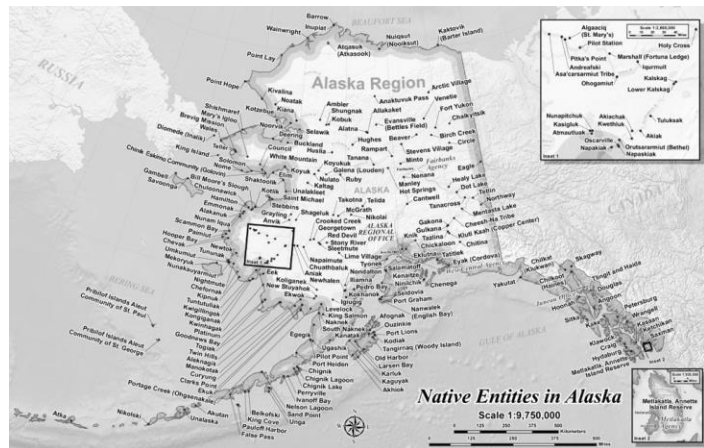
A national non-profit established to address the tremendous cancer inequities faced by American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Mission: To eliminate cancer burdens of American Indian families through education and improved access to prevention, early detection, treatment, and survivor support.

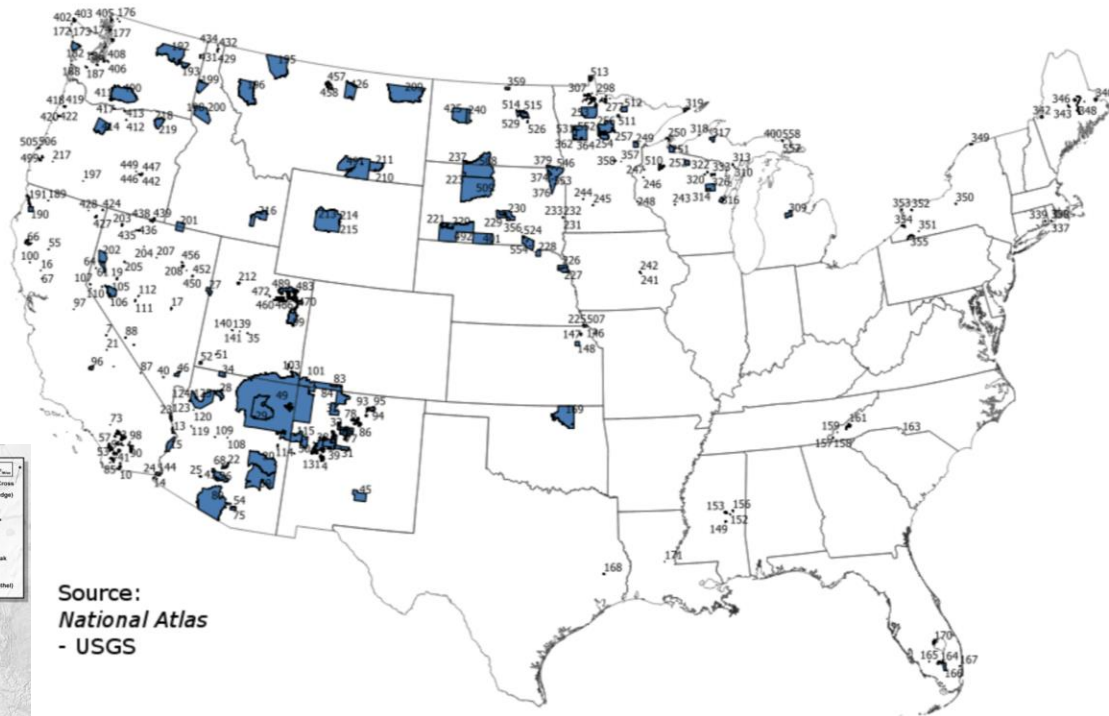




Tribal Nations



Native American Reservations in the Continental United States



Source:
National Atlas
- USGS

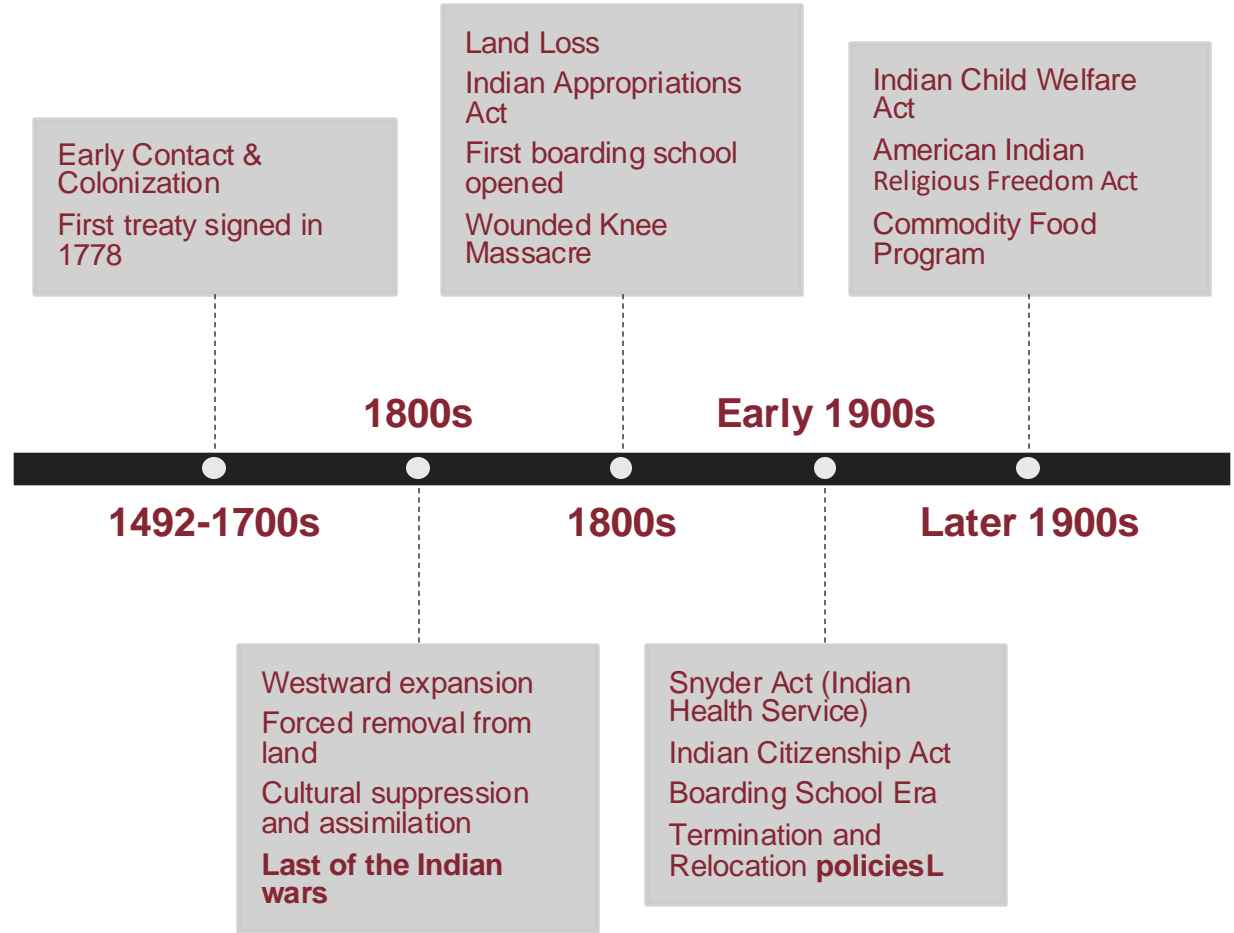
Disparities in cancer incidence and outcomes



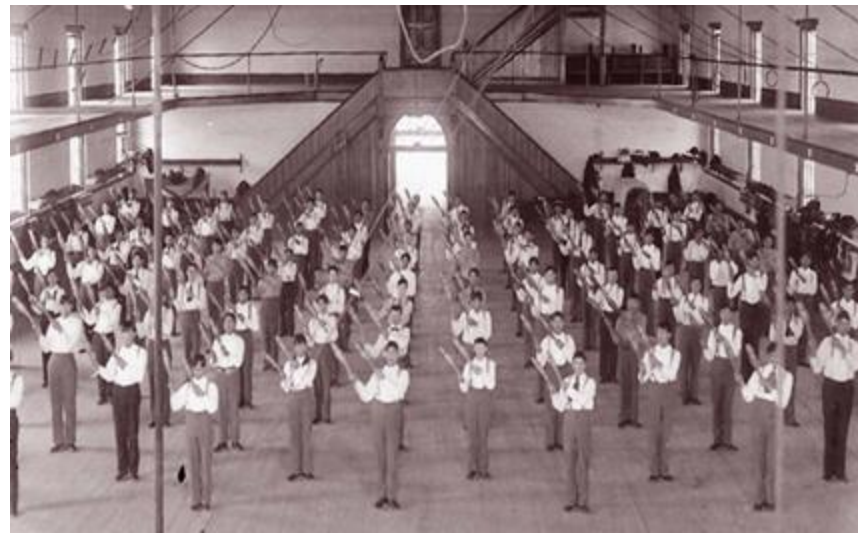
- Cancer is the 2nd leading cause of death among American Indians and Alaska Natives
 - Cardiovascular disease is number one
- Alaska Native (AN) people have the highest recorded incidence and death rate from colorectal cancer (CRC) globally. (J Cancer Policy. 2021 Jul 12;29:100293. doi: [10.1016/j.jcipo.2021.100293](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcipo.2021.100293))
- American Indians have the highest incidence of any population for cancers of kidney, liver, lung, cervical, and colorectal.
 - Lung cancer incidence among American Indian/Alaskan Native men in the Northern Plains is nearly double that in White men.
- Minus the Southwest region, AI/AN men and women were more likely to be current smokers (Am J Public Health. 2014 Jun;104(Suppl 3):S377–S387. doi: [10.2105/AJPH.2013.301673](https://doi.org/10.2105/AJPH.2013.301673))
- Life expectancy for AI/AN and NHW populations: 65 vs 76
5-year survival rates are the lowest for AI/AN individuals (Arias, E., Tejada-Vera, B., Kochanek, K. & Ahmad, F. *Provisional Life Expectancy Estimates for 2021*. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/vsrr/vsrr023.pdf> (2022) doi:10.15620/cdc:118999.)



Timeline of U.S. Colonization Impacting American Indians



Historical trauma is CURRENT trauma



Images from the Boarding School Era

Kamloops Indian Residential School Remains of 215 children found in May 2021





Reclaiming Native Health Healing with Culture

Two Tobacco Ways

Traditional tobacco use honors the Creator by cultural protocols for spiritual, ceremonial and cultural uses.

Commerical tobacco use causes sickness, disease, and can lead to death in our communities and is governed by marketing protocols of addiction.



Tobacco is holding me, carrying me
to the next place it's supposed to be.



#KeepTobaccoSacred
www.traditionaltobacco.org

We are the
seeds of our
ancestors



#KeepTobaccoSacred
www.traditionaltobacco.org



Wisdom Keeper...

- honors tobacco
- helps others know tobacco
- frees tobacco seeds from museums
- connects with tobacco
- connects spiritually with tobacco
- shares tobacco teachings
- heals with tobacco

#KeepTobaccoSacred
www.traditionaltobacco.org





Keeping Tobacco Sacred

The ancestors 1,000 years ago prayed for us to be here... they talked about the future generations... they prayed for our protection... I prayed for the future nothing different than our ancestors did for us...

Tobacco is holding me, carrying me to the next place it's supposed to be.



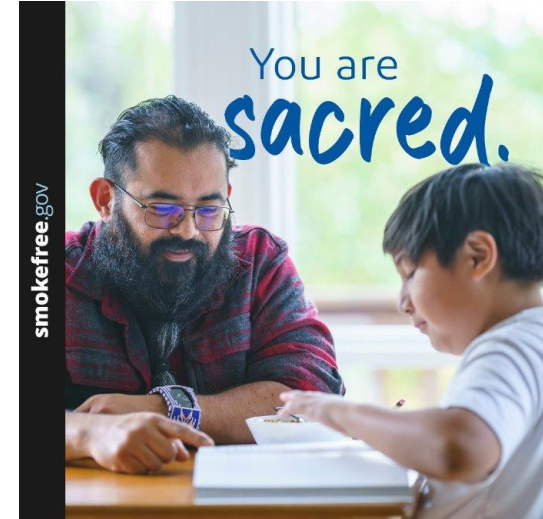
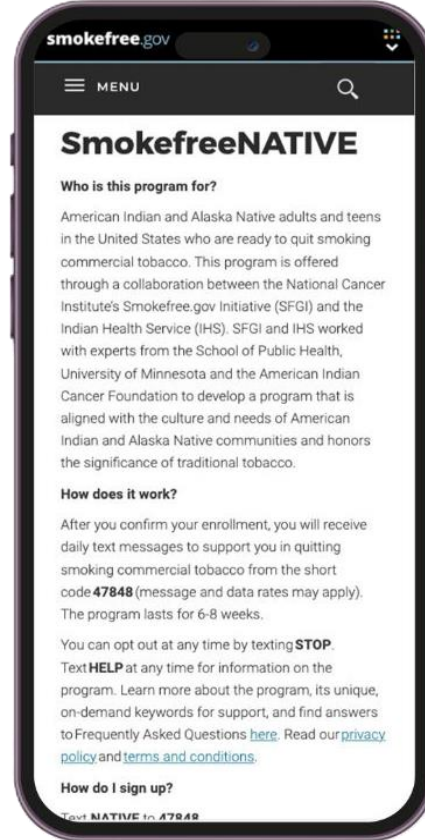
"Tobacco is first and foremost in everything. Everybody should carry tobacco. Growing up we put tobacco out for different things. We put tobacco out for somebody, something or for the creator to watch over us. This is how we communicate with the Creator."

Amik (Larry Smallwood)
Ojibwe Asemaa, Mille Lacs Band of Ojibwe



SmokefreeNATIVE

- 6-8 week texting program (depending on when quit date is set)
- Free (data or message rates may apply)
- Enroll via web form or SMS
 - Text NATIVE or 47848
- Launched December 14, 2023





~~World no tobacco day~~

Keep Tobacco Sacred
May 31, 2025

Our world will never
be tobacco free



Indigenous Pink

▶▶▶▶▶ Breast Health

1 in 8



women will get breast cancer in their lifetime

Increased Risks

GENDER
Being female



BREAST DENSITY
Dense breast tissue



GENETICS
Inherited DNA changes in genes



FAMILY HISTORY
Mother, sister, daughter has had breast cancer



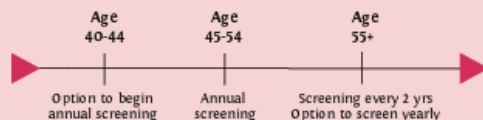
40 **AGEING**



CONTACT YOUR HEALTH CARE PROVIDER IF YOU HAVE ONE OR MORE OF THESE RISKS

Breast cancer usually has no symptoms when the tumor is small and most treatable.

Screening Guidelines/Recommendations



Talk to your health care provider about when screening is best for you.



Breast cancer is the 2nd leading cause of cancer death for American Indian women. A mammogram may save your life.

What can I do?

BREASTFEED

Breastfeeding reduces estrogen exposure that helps prevent breast cancer



REGULAR MAMMOGRAMS

Women 40+ should have the option to have a mammogram once a year



REGULAR BREAST EXAMS

Speak to your health care provider for options



WEIGHT CONTROL

Overweight or obese women are at a higher risk



EXERCISE

Exercising 3 days/week may lower your risk



LIMIT ALCOHOL USE

Alcohol can increase estrogen levels, which may increase your risk



American Indian Cancer Foundation.

CLINIC INFORMATION:





Liver Cancer Overview

Native Communities face higher rates of liver cancer than other groups¹. To combat this, there are many steps we can take to reduce our risk of liver cancer. Getting vaccinated against hepatitis B and being tested (and potentially treated) for hepatitis B and hepatitis C are great ways to protect our livers. Limiting our alcohol use, increasing our physical activity, and eating a healthy diet also help improve our liver health!

Your liver is located in the upper right portion of your abdomen (belly) and is about the size of a football. This amazing organ turns what you eat and drink into energy and nutrients for your body to use. The liver also removes harmful substances from your body. Liver cancer is the growth and spread of unhealthy cells in the liver. A group of these unhealthy cells is called a tumor².



Fast Facts

Liver cancer rates were between 50% to over 3 times higher for Native people compared to the white population.

The rates of liver cancer are significantly higher for Native males compared with Native females.

Rates of liver cancer among the 65+ age group are between 2 to 3 times higher for Indigenous males compared with the white population.

Symptoms

Most people do not have signs or symptoms in the early stages of liver cancer. When symptoms appear they may include:

- Weight loss without trying and/or loss of appetite
- Discomfort in the upper abdomen on the right side
- Nausea, vomiting, and/or unusual tiredness
- A swollen abdomen
- Yellow discoloration of skin and whites of eyes (also called jaundice)
- White stools

Make an appointment with your doctor if you have any troubling signs or symptoms.

Causes

Lifestyle risk factors:

- Nonalcoholic fatty liver disease or obesity
- Heavy alcohol use
- Commercial tobacco use

Chronic viral hepatitis:

- Hepatitis B or hepatitis C infections (usually spread through shared needles)

Other risk factors:

- Certain inherited liver diseases
- Diabetes
- Cirrhosis or scarring of the liver

Traditional Medicine



Traditional medicine can complement western medicine in many ways. From eating Indigenous foods to participating in traditional physical activity, our Native cultures provide many health opportunities. Discuss your liver health with your traditional medicine practitioner. There may be supportive medicines or cultural practices to help you on your holistic health journey. Your traditional medicine healer may also be able to provide guidance and support³.

Reduce your risk

The best way to prevent liver cancer is to prevent cirrhosis and hepatitis B and C infections. You can reduce your risk of liver cancer through changes in lifestyle choices:

- Get screened and vaccinated for hepatitis B
- Limit alcohol use
- Quit smoking commercial tobacco
- Maintain a healthy weight

Protect yourself from hepatitis B and C by taking the following precautions:

- Not sharing needles, other injection drug equipment, or equipment used to snort or smoke drugs
- Practice safer sex, including condom use
- Only getting tattoos and body piercings from someone licensed
- Get tested for hepatitis B and C, seek medical care if you have it

Your Resources

The Native American Community Clinic can help support you in reducing your risk of liver cancer while honoring your traditions⁴. We can offer help in:

- Adopting a healthy lifestyle and eating habits
- Quitting smoking commercial tobacco
- Harm reduction services and substance use treatment
- Hepatitis screening and treatment



americanindiancancer.org

¹ "Liver Cancer Incidence in the American Indian and Alaska Native Population, United States—2012-2016." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Cancer Statistics, 7 October 2019. <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/indianalaskalivc/>. Accessed 13 November 2020.

² "Liver Cancer." Mayo Clinic, Mayo Clinic Patient Care & Health Information: Diseases & Conditions, 18 May 2020. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/liver-cancer/symptoms-causes/slc-20032659>.

³ Kuttan, Mary and Githa Paredi. Indigenous Native American Health Traditions. / Human Press, vol. 6, no. 4, 1 June 2019, pp. 477-478. National Center for Biotechnology Information. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6213884/>

⁴ Native American Community Clinic. Service. <https://naacc.org/service>



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