

CANCER AND ENVIRONMENTAL RISK FACTORS IN IOWA

A Bold New Conversation About Cancer

Cancer impacts all of us. Whether it's a personal experience, a family member, or a friend, Iowa's high cancer rates mean that we've all seen the pain and devastation a cancer diagnosis can cause. While we know some of the causes – alcohol and tobacco use, exposure to UV light or tanning beds – other potential causes for Iowa's outlier status don't get as much attention.

There is rarely a circumstance where an incidence of cancer – or even a population experiencing an overall increase in cancer – can be tied to just one thing. Cancer almost always is related to a number of factors in combination. Folks in the health world say it is “multifactorial.”

A new project from The Harkin Institute and the Iowa Environmental Council is exploring the environmental risk factors of Iowa's crisis. Throughout the project, we are partnering with experts and everyday Iowans whose lives have been impacted by cancer to bring to light what is missing in the puzzle of cancer factors in our state.

Where We Will Begin

- A Harkin Institute fellow at Drake University will conduct an academic literature and research review to summarize and describe what is known about environmental pollution exposure and cancer risk.
- The Iowa Environmental Council, Harkin Institute, and partners will conduct listening sessions in 15 communities across Iowa that are being impacted by cancer and environmental pollution.
- The literature review will be submitted for publication and become the basis for a report and statewide campaign about environmental cancer risks. This campaign will allow Iowans to tell their stories about how cancer has impacted their lives, families, and economic well-being.

What We Will Achieve

- Iowans deserve to be informed about environmental risk factors. Through partnerships with health-focused organizations, the media, and broad public outreach, we will help increase access to critical information that can save lives.
- Cancer prevention in Iowa has been severely under-resourced. With this project, we will use a research-based approach that asks Iowans about their needs so we can share their stories and improve the outlook for people across the state.



Iowa has the **second-highest** cancer rate in the U.S.



Iowa is one of **only two states** where cancer is increasing

Our goal is to bring people together around policies that will reduce environmental contamination as a factor in cancers in Iowa.

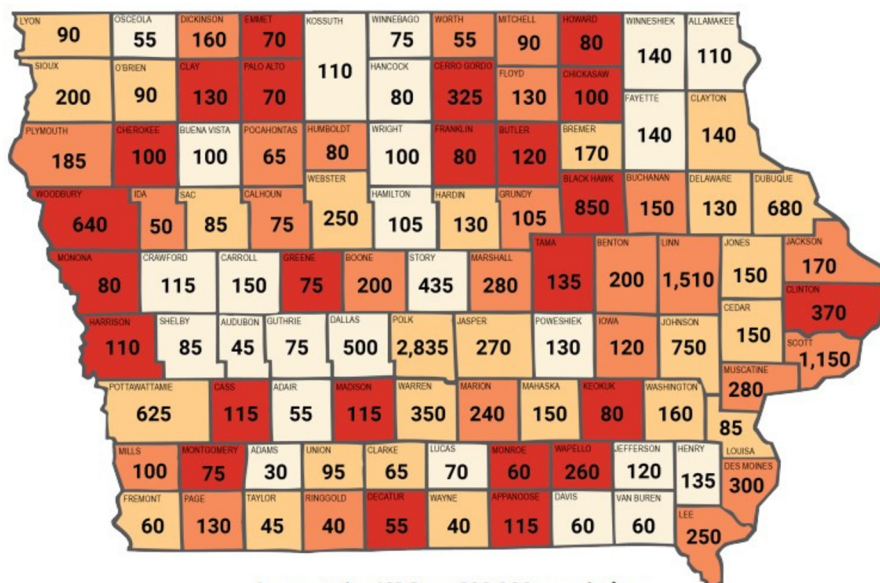
Learn more, share your story, or RSVP for a listening session near you:



CANCER IN IOWA: 2025 COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSIONS

Estimates for New Cancers in 2025

Source: "Cancer in Iowa - 2025" report, Iowa Cancer Registry



Iowa rate* = 491.8 per 100,000 population

396.9-466.9 (lowest rates in state) 467.8-492.3 (includes state rate) 493.8-513.6 (greater than state rate) 514.1-580.0 (highest rates in state)

*Rates are age-adjusted and per 100,000 population, 2017-2021

2025 Listening Session Schedule

These sessions are free and open to the public, with an RSVP required.

June 11: Warren County
June 12: Polk County
June 17: Des Moines County
June 18: Scott County
June 18: Johnson County
July 8: Monroe County
July 16: Clayton County
July 17: Winneshiek County
July 23: Pottawattamie County
July 23: Montgomery County
August 5: Palo Alto County
August 6: Woodbury County
August 6: Carroll County
August 12: Black Hawk County
August 13: Tama County
August 14: Statewide Virtual Listening Session

See times and locations, and RSVP for a listening session near you, at iaenvironment.org/cancerproject or by scanning this code:



Share Your Story

Our lived experiences are powerful. Stories connect us to one another and help us feel less alone in the broader fight against cancer. Listening to Iowans' voices is a critical part of this project. If you want to share your story, we want to hear from you! IEC, The Harkin Institute, and the Iowa Farmers Union are hosting listening sessions throughout Iowa this summer. We'll share information about cancer in your area and in Iowa, and provide the opportunity to share your story and hear others' stories.

Can't Attend a Listening Session?

There are lots of ways to get involved and share your story. Visit iaenvironment.org/email to receive updates about the project. Or share your story via our online form at iaenvironment.org/cancerproject.

Listening sessions presented by:

