

Liver cancer deaths surge 27% in a decade - the fastest rise of any major cancer

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New analysis by Liver Cancer UK of Office for National Statistics (ONS) mortality data has revealed that deaths from liver cancer are rising faster than those from any other major cancer in England and Wales.

The number of annual deaths from liver cancer climbed from 4,696 in 2016 to 5,953 in 2025, an increase of 26.8%. Of the 19 cancer groups examined, liver and intrahepatic bile duct cancer ranked first for both the percentage rise and the increase in the number of deaths. Its crude death rate also rose from 8.1 to 9.7 per 100,000 people, an increase of 1.6 per 100,000 people.

The rise outstripped every other cancer group in the analysis. Overall, annual deaths increased in 12 of the 19 cancer groups examined and fell in seven. Deaths from liver cancer stand in stark contrast to progress on several other major cancers: deaths from lung cancer fell by 10.1%, while stomach cancer deaths fell by 17.2%. Breast cancer deaths also fell by 4.1% and ovarian cancer deaths by 15.8%.

Despite advances in the treatment of many cancers, liver cancer remains one of the deadliest. It often develops with few or subtle symptoms, meaning many people are diagnosed only after the disease has advanced, when treatment options are more limited. Only around 13% of people diagnosed with liver cancer survive for five years or more, falling to 8% at ten years.

These figures highlight the critical need for better prevention and earlier diagnosis. Liver Cancer UK, part of Liver UK, is calling for a comprehensive public health response that improves awareness of symptoms and risk factors, helps prevent liver disease and ensures people at higher risk are identified and offered regular surveillance so that cancer can be found at a stage when treatment is more likely to be successful.

This new analysis is being released during October, which is Liver Cancer Awareness Month, underlining the need to improve understanding of liver cancer and the importance of earlier diagnosis.

Pamela Healy, Chief Executive at Liver UK, the new name for the British Liver Trust said: "The sharp rise in deaths should be a wake-up call. While deaths from some major cancers are falling, liver cancer deaths are rising, and we cannot accept that as inevitable.

"We know much of the risk is linked to liver disease, and there are opportunities to make a real difference. We need stronger action on prevention and better identification of people at increased risk to ensure they receive regular surveillance.

"Finding liver cancer earlier can mean more treatment options and a better chance of survival. These figures must be a catalyst for action, not simply another set of statistics. We owe it to the people behind the numbers to change the direction of travel."

Hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) is the most common type of primary liver cancer in the UK. The biggest risk factor is pre-existing liver disease. Excess weight, viral hepatitis and alcohol misuse are among the leading causes of liver disease, and people living with cirrhosis or chronic hepatitis are at particularly high risk of developing liver cancer.

Possible symptoms include unexplained weight loss, jaundice, abdominal pain or swelling, loss of appetite and persistent fatigue. These symptoms can have many causes, but anyone concerned about them should seek medical advice.

Liver Cancer UK is urging the NHS to prioritise the identification and surveillance of people at increased risk, alongside action to reduce preventable liver disease and improve public awareness. Anyone concerned about possible symptoms or their risk of liver disease should seek medical advice, and trusted information about liver cancer, risk factors, symptoms and support is available at livercanceruk.org.

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