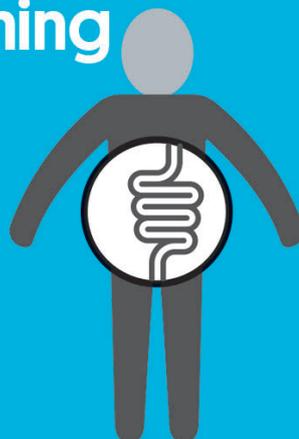


CASE CANCER SCREENINGS

Reduced health care costs through screening



Colorectal cancer screening reduces health care costs by

20%

compared to diagnosing cancer in some other way

CASE CANCER SCREENINGS : Early diagnosis and prevention of cancer through screening

In Finland, one in three people develop cancer during their lifetime. As the population gets older, the number of cancer patients increases as well. Cancer is the second most common cause of death in Finland, accounting for 3.6% of health care costs.

If the cancer is diagnosed at an early stage, the patient is more likely to recover.

Moreover, the treatment periods are usually shorter and less expensive. The costs of specialised health care are lower for cancer patients who participate in screening compared to patients who do not.

Cancer screening is an efficient, cost-effective way to ensure the detection of cancer at an early stage. Finland currently has two national cancer screening programmes: cervical cancer screening for women aged 30–60, and breast cancer screening for women aged 50–69.

Cervical cancer screening and the planned colorectal cancer screening can also prevent cancer. These screenings can detect not only the early stages of cancer but also precancerous stages. When the patient is treated at a precancerous stage, they will not develop cancer.

The screening programmes have significantly reduced the cancer mortality rates. Cervical cancer screening has been organised since the 1960s. During the implementation of the screening programme, the number of cancers has decreased to one-fifth of that of the 1960s. The breast cancer screening programme began in the 1980s. In 1992–2011, breast cancer mortality was 33% lower among women who took part in screening compared to a situation in which screening would not have been conducted.



One life
Enjoy every day.



The One Life health project strives towards a healthier Finland. The Finnish Brain Association, the Finnish Diabetes Association, the Filha Finnish Lung Health Association, the Organisation for Respiratory Health, the Finnish Association for Mental Health, the Finnish Heart Association, and the Cancer Society of Finland have teamed up to promote people's health and welfare throughout their lives. Duodecim participates in the project as an expert organisation.

Research shows that the existing screening programmes should be expanded. Persons over the age of 65 could also benefit from cervical cancer screening. Breast cancer screening should be extended to cover 74-year-old persons as well.

Colorectal cancer screening of all 60–74-year-old persons should be included in the screening programme. Common in both men and women, colorectal cancer is the third most common cancer in Finland. The treatment of colorectal cancer is among the most expensive cancer treatments. Majority of the costs are related to a stage where cancer cannot usually be cured. If colorectal cancer could be prevented by detecting it at an early or precancerous stage, both money and human lives could be saved.

Costs and savings:

Breast cancer screening costs around 30 euros per one tested person. Persons belonging to the target group are invited to take part in screening every two years. A small number of participants are referred to additional tests. Extending the screening to cover 74-year-old persons would result in additional costs of around 4 million euros per year (including screening and required additional tests).

Cervical cancer screening also costs around 30 euros per one tested person. People are usually invited to screening every five years. Extending the screening to cover 65-year-old persons would result in additional costs of around 1.1 million euros per year (including screening and required additional tests).

Colorectal cancer screening costs around 10 euros per participant. Launching the screening programme for people aged from 60 to 74 would cost around 14 million euros per year (including screening and required additional tests).

The cancer mortality rate can be significantly reduced by cancer screening. Screening also helps cut down health care costs as it prevents cancer, enables early detection, and allows shorter treatment periods. The colorectal cancer screening trial has shown that the specialised health care costs are around 20% lower when the cancer had been detected during screening compared to a situation where the cancer had been detected in some other way.

Please note:

A small number of people who take part in screening are invited to take additional tests on the basis of the results of the screening. These additional tests have been included in the cost estimates presented above. The costs of the actual screening are lower without taking these additional tests into account. The exact costs of screening may vary between municipalities since screening is usually conducted by private service providers whose prices may be different from each other.

Sources:

- <https://cancerregistry.fi/screening/breast-cancer-screening/>
- <https://cancerregistry.fi/screening/cervical-cancer-screening/>
- <https://cancerregistry.fi/screening/colorectal-cancer-screening/>
- Paulus Torkki, Riikka-Leena Leskelä, Miika Linna, Suvi Mäklin, Jukka-Pekka Mecklin, Petri Bono, Vesa Kataja & Sakari Karjalainen (2018) Cancer costs and outcomes in the Finnish population 2004–2014, *Acta Oncologica*, 57:2, 297-303, DOI: 10.1080/0284186X.2017.1343495
- Suvi Mäklin, unpublished article, 2018.



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