

**3
STEPS
DETECT®**

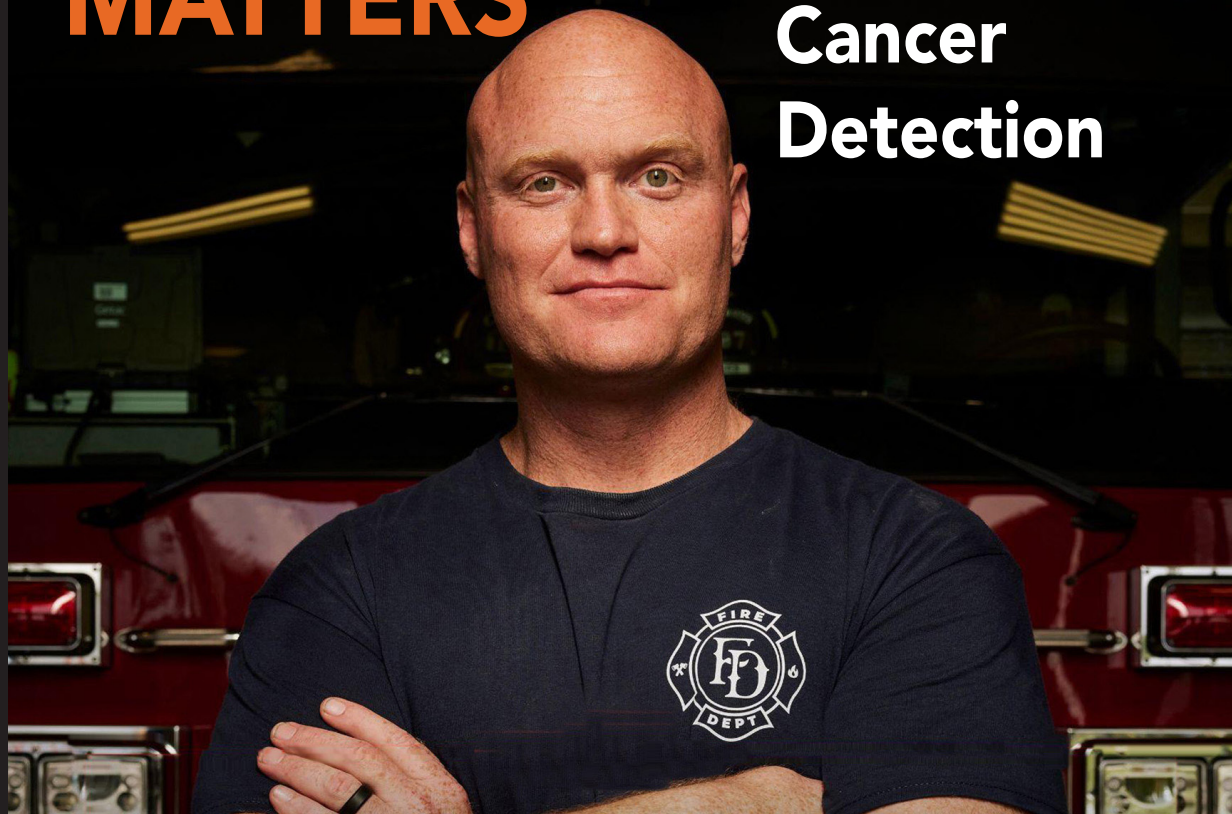
RESPONSE TIME MATTERS

**in Early
Cancer
Detection**

TACTICAL

TOOLKIT

**FOR
FIREFIGHTERS**



DetecTogether

*Leading the Patient
Activation Movement*

**We know that cancer is the leading cause of LODD
in the fire service.**

**This tactical guide teaches you how to recognize a
potentially serious health change, know when to act,
and communicate effectively with a healthcare provider.**

**Check out this guide and
learn 3 Steps Detect®.**



TURNING AWARENESS INTO ACTION

Early action can mean the difference
between life and death.



EARLY VS. LATE DIAGNOSIS SURVIVAL RATES

STAGE 0/1 (LOCAL)

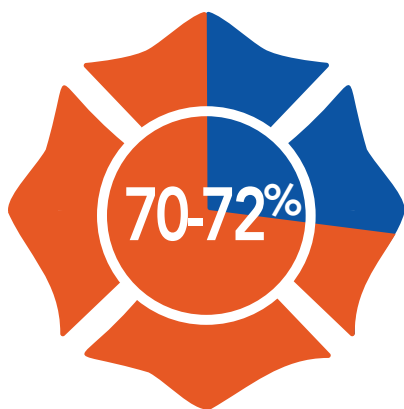
STAGE 4 (DISTANT)

BLADDER	70%	8%
BREAST	99%	30%
COLON	91%	15%
LUNG	61%	7%
PROSTATE	99%	32%
SKIN	99%	32%
TESTICULAR	99%	72%
THYROID	99%	53%

"Cancer Statistics Center." American Cancer Society, <https://cancerstatisticscenter.cancer.org/>. Accessed 12 Dec. 2023

Image created and provided by DetecTogether for authorized use only, 2025. www.detecttogether.org

70-72% of IAFF LODD are
attributed to occupational cancer



Be sure to share this info
with a doctor.

Firefighters face **higher risk
of cancer** due to occupational
exposure.

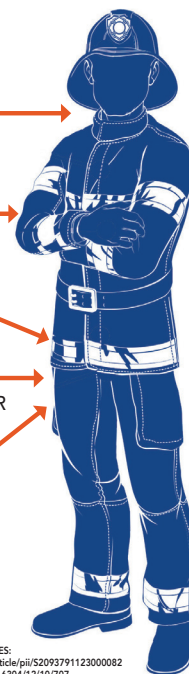
28% GREATER RISK
THYROID

36% GREATER RISK
SKIN CANCER

31% GREATER RISK
PROSTATE CANCER

37% GREATER RISK
TESTICULAR CANCER

19% GREATER RISK
COLON CANCER
(colorectal)



SOURCES:
www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2093791123000082
www.mdpi.com/2305-6304/12/10/707

Build your early detection skills from
the foundation with

3 Steps Detect®

#1



Know Your Great Health

- Know how you feel when you are at your best.
- Tune in to your energy level sleep patterns, weight, skin, and bathroom habits.
- Get to know what is normal for you.

Check out our
self exam hints
on the last few
pages of this
guide.



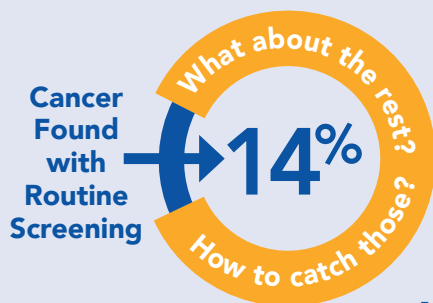
ENERGY LEVEL

BUMPS, LUMPS,
MOLES

PAIN

BATHROOM
HABITS

SLEEP PATTERNS



About Cancer Screening

Cancer screenings can be a valuable tool in your toolbox. But did you know that only 14% of cancers are found through routine cancer screenings?

Having a doctor to help you determine your screening needs, access care, and interpret test results all needs to be a part of your plan.

Only 6 Cancers with Screenings

TYPICAL SCREENINGS RECOMMENDED FOR FIREFIGHTERS



SKIN

Annual skin exams with a dermatologist are recommended. Firefighters have elevated risk for melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma. No minimum age.



LUNG

Low-dose CT scans are used in at-risk firefighters. Starting at age 50.



PROSTATE

PSA blood test and digital rectal exam Starting at age 40 (Age 50 for general population.)



BREAST

Mammograms for women Starting at age 35. (Age 40 for general population.)



CERVICAL

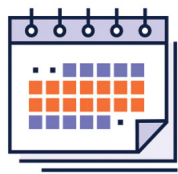
Pap smears for women Starting at age 21.



COLON

Stool tests, sigmoidoscopy, or colonoscopy Starting at age 40. (Age 45 for general population.)

#2



Use the 2-Week Rule

- Monitor any subtle health change(s) for 2 weeks.
- Use tools like your phone to set a reminder for when it started.
- Check in to see if it's still happening, and if so:
 - Make an appointment with your doctor.
 - Share your thoughts with a trusted friend.



PHONE



STICKY NOTES



CALENDAR



DAY PLANNER



DISCUSS

Absolutely no excuses are allowed.



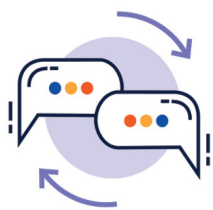
Do you know what is The Most Common Cancer Symptom?

A subtle & persistent
health change*
that lasts for 2 weeks.



*A health change could be one thing or a pattern of changes that happen persistently.

#3



Share with Your Doctor!

- Share information about any health changes with a doctor.

5 things to share:

- 1) My health change is _____
- 2) This is not normal for me because _____
- 3) It has been going on for _____
- 4) I have tried to make it better by _____
- 5) It's affecting my life in this way _____

It may be difficult or embarrassing, but it could be life-saving.



Even if you have an annual department physical, you need an annual doctor's visit, too!



DID YOU KNOW? THE JOB OF
**FIREFIGHTING IS
A CLASS 1 CARCINOGEN?**

IARC* CLASS 1 CARCINOGENS

Definition: Substances, chemical mixtures, or exposure circumstances that have been classified as carcinogenic to humans. This classification is based on sufficient evidence demonstrating their carcinogenicity in humans.

Notable examples include:

- Firefighting
- Tobacco smoke
- Asbestos
- Benzene
- Ultraviolet (UV) radiation
- Processed meats

This classification serves as a critical tool for public health, guiding regulations and preventive measures against cancer-causing agents.

**International Agency for Research on Cancer*

Tell your doctor you're a firefighter EVERY TIME you visit.

Your job puts you at higher cancer risk from smoke, toxins, diesel exhaust, and PFAS exposure.

In tandem with 3 Steps Detect®, this checklist helps you stay ahead with early detection, symptom awareness, and speaking up when something's not right.

All Firefighters

- ☐ If symptoms last 2+ weeks, contact a doctor—DON'T WAIT!
- ☐ Get a doctor for health record tracking and to fast-track diagnosis.
- ☐ Share your higher cancer risk with your doctor (See "Dear Physician" Card below).
- ☐ Schedule an annual physical exam in advance (even if you have a department physical).
- ☐ Monthly testicular and breast self-exam (Breast and Testicle Exam Cards below).

Age>20 ☐ Annual dermatology skin exam ☐ Monthly self-checks for skin changes

Age>21 or earlier if sexually active ☐ Annual pap test (females) ☐ Annual urinalysis (blood in urine)

Age>35 ☐ Annual mammography beginning at age 35 for female firefighters

Age>40 ☐ Colonoscopy beginning at age 40 for firefighters, 45 for moderate risk
☐ Stool-based testing if asymptomatic and colonoscopy not yet indicated
☐ PSA blood test discussion around age 40-45 for male firefighters

Age>50 ☐ Ask about low-dose lung CT scan due to consistent exposure to products of combustion.
If not possible, ask "How can we effectively screen my lungs?"

Preparing for Doctor's Appointments

- ☐ Monitor changes lasting 2+ weeks – document symptoms, start dates, and what you've done to address them.
- ☐ Share your years of service and major exposure events (fires, hazmat, overhaul). **Don't underreport;** it can delay diagnosis.
- ☐ Note family history of cancer (parents, siblings, grandparents).
- ☐ Report abnormal results from previous tests—never assume they're already noted.
- ☐ Note new medications and supplements

NOTE: Patients who prepare questions in advance have better outcomes.

- ☐ Try questions like these for starters:
 - Could these symptoms be cancer or another serious condition?
 - What tests should I consider?
 - Because I am a firefighter – exposed to carcinogens – what screenings should I schedule earlier than generally recommended?
 - When should I follow up if symptoms continue?

Continued on next page.



Advocate for Yourself

- ☐ Trust your instincts.
- ☐ Ask for further evaluation if symptoms persist for 2+ weeks.
- ☐ Request appropriate imaging or referral if needed.
- ☐ Don't be afraid to seek a second opinion if concerns remain or you don't feel heard.

**Firefighters are trained to act quickly on risk –
your health deserves the same urgency.**

**WE CAN'T SAY IT ENOUGH...
RESPONSE TIME MATTERS.**

Always begin the conversation with
a doctor reminding them that **YOU
ARE A FIREFIGHTER**. That will provide
them the perspective they need for
sharing the most beneficial info.



Your "Dear Physician" Card

Bring this with you
to your medical
appointments to help
spark a conversation
about your medical
needs and elevated risks
as a firefighter.

DEAR PHYSICIAN

THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION
(WHO) CLASSIFIED FIREFIGHTING AS
A GROUP 1 CARCINOGEN.

**As a firefighter, I have
a 14% greater risk of
dying from cancer than
the general population.**

On the job, I may inhale, ingest,
and absorb carcinogens from
smoke, soot, and fumes.

**Firefighters have an elevated
risk for many cancers,
including:**

- Breast (women) **26%**
- Colon **19%**
- Mesothelioma **58%**
- Prostate **31%**

- Skin **36%**
- Testes **37%**
- Thyroid **28%**

Due to occupational risks,
I may need cancer screening
earlier and more often.



DetecTogether

SAVING LIVES THROUGH
EARLY CANCER DETECTION

SOURCES:

www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2093791123000082
www.mdpi.com/2305-6304/12/10/707

Tools for Conducting the All-Important Self Exams

Testicular Cancer

The #1 cancer in males between 15-44 years.

Firefighters have a 37% greater risk of diagnosis than the general public.

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Check Yourself

Early detection is
in your hands!

TESTICULAR SELF-EXAM

Check yourself in the shower at least once a month.



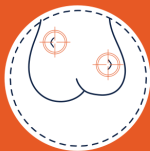
CHECK ONE
TESTICLE AT A TIME



GENTLY ROLL IT
BETWEEN THE
FINGERS



FEEL UP THE
SPERMATIC CORDS
ON THE BACK OF
THE TESTICLES



LOOK FOR HARD
LUMPS, SMOOTH
OR ROUNDED
BUMPS



CHANGES IN
SIZE, SHAPE, OR
CONSISTENCY



OR ANY PAINFUL
AREAS

Turn over the card to learn what to do next.
3 Steps Detect® is a simple road map to
early cancer detection.

3 Steps Detect®



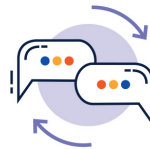
STEP 1 Know Your Great Health

Know how you feel when you are at your best. Tune into your energy level, sleep patterns, weight, skin, and bathroom habits. Get to know what is normal for you.



STEP 2 Use the 2-Week Rule

If any changes in your health last longer than 2 weeks, it's time to call the doctor.



STEP 3 Share with Your Doctor

You know your body best. Share information about any health changes with your doctor. It may be difficult or feel embarrassing, but it could be lifesaving!



DetecTogether

SAVING LIVES THROUGH
EARLY CANCER DETECTION

Tools for Conducting the All-Important Self Exams

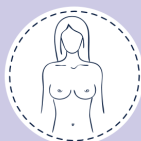
Breast Cancer

Even though mammograms screenings should be scheduled annually, you have the ability to find abnormalities on your own – sooner!

DetecTogether Check Yourself

Early detection is
in your hands!

Do your exam at the same time every month, when breasts are not tender or lumpy. Post-menopausal women should do the exam on the same day every month.



IN FRONT OF A MIRROR EXAMINE YOUR BREASTS; NOTE ANY CHANGES (INVERTED NIPPLES; SWELLING; RASH; REDNESS; SORENESS; DIMPLED, PUCKERED, OR BULGING SKIN)



EXAMINE EACH BREAST FOR LUMPS USING AN UP & DOWN AND CIRCULAR/WEDGE MOTION

CHECK ARMPITS FOR LUMPS



SQUEEZE EACH NIPPLE;
NOTE ANY DISCHARGE

REEXAMINE
LYING DOWN

3 Steps Detect® is a simple roadmap to early cancer detection. [Learn more ▶](#)

3 Steps Detect



STEP 1 Know Your Great

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DetecTogether

SAVING LIVES THROUGH
EARLY CANCER DETECTION

3
STEPS
DETECT®

TACTICAL

TOOLKIT

FOR
FIREFIGHTERS

Keep Your Edge. Stay Ready.

You've completed the 3 Steps Detect® Tactical Toolkit.

**Continue building your early detection readiness
with our free online learning.**



Explore real-world scenarios, interactive activities, and practical tools that reinforce the 3 Steps Detect® approach and help you recognize persistent health changes, communicate health concerns effectively to get the answers you need, and take action sooner – because Response Time Matters for your health, too.

Would You Recognize a Cancer Symptom?

Would you recognize a cancer symptom?

A video player interface showing a man in a dark jacket and cap. The video title is "Would you recognize a cancer symptom?". The progress bar shows 00:00 / 31:42. The DetecTogether logo is at the bottom right of the video player.

A square QR code with a blue border.

Scan to Watch

DetecTogether

SAVING LIVES THROUGH
EARLY CANCER DETECTION

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