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World Cancer Day

Cancer causes one in four Israeli deaths

Haaretz

Cancer is responsible for one in four Israeli deaths, the Israel Cancer Association said Tuesday. At the same time, the number of Israelis coming down with the disease dropped 18 percent between 1990 and 2011 – while the rate of survival has risen.

Some 400 children in Israel are diagnosed with cancer each year, nearly half of them with leukemia. Preliminary findings from research at Haifa University indicate that if a child is breast-fed, as opposed to nursing from the bottle, the chances of the child contracting leukemia or lymphoma during his or her early years may be reduced by as much as 60 percent. This research is led by Dr. Lital Keinan-Boker.

At the other end of the age scale, people over the age of 65 are three times as likely to contract the disease as those ages 45 to 64, the association noted.

“Today 75 percent of cancer deaths occur in people over 70. With life expectancy increasing, there are more people requiring cancer treatment,” said Prof. Eliezer Robinson, association chairman. “These are older people who had background diseases associated with aging before they came down with cancer. The healthcare system’s new challenge today is to set up special geriatric units staffed by specialists from various disciplines to deal with the situation.”

In 2011, there were 10,287 deaths in the country due to cancer, with 28,077 new patients contracting the disease. The main types of lethal cancer for men were cancer of the lung, pancreas, prostate and rectum, while among women the chief causes of death were cancer of the breast, pancreas and rectum.