

Tony Winner Linda Lavin Dies Shortly After Lung Cancer Diagnosis

Star of the beloved sitcom “Alice,” Linda Lavin only recently discovered that she had lung cancer.

January 1, 2025 By Laura Schmidt

Linda Lavin, an award-winning actress best known for playing the title role in the CBS sitcom *Alice*, died at age 87 of complications from [lung cancer](#), according to [The Associated Press](#) (AP).

The Tony Award-winning actress and singer had only recently discovered she had lung cancer, which is the leading cause of cancer death in the United States, accounting for about one in five of all cancer deaths, according to the [American Cancer Society](#) (ACS).

Unfortunately, lung cancer is often diagnosed late and is [difficult to treat](#). Some people go misdiagnosed for a long time because they either have minor symptoms or their symptoms are similar to those of other illnesses, such as pneumonia, allergies or a cold.

This year, an estimated 234,580 people will be [diagnosed](#) with lung cancer and more than 125,000 people will die of the disease, according to the ACS.

Following success on [Broadway](#) in the 1970s, Lavin joined the cast of *Alice*, which was based on the Martin Scorsese-directed film *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* and ran from 1976 to 1985. Her role as a widowed mother working at a roadside diner to support her 12-year-old son earned her an Emmy nomination for Outstanding Lead Actress in a Comedy Series.

Lavin made numerous other television appearances, including as host of her own 1980 holiday special for CBS titled *Linda in Wonderland*. She also appeared as a guest on *The Muppet Show*, *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*, *The O.C.* and HBO's smash hit *The Sopranos*.

Throughout her long-spanning career, Lavin won several prestigious awards, including two Golden Globe Awards and three Drama Desk Awards. She also won the Tony Award for Best Actress in a

Play in 1987 for her role in Neil Simon’s Broadway Bound.

Lavin continued to work as recently as December, promoting the new Netflix series No Good Deed, in which she appears.

Born in Portland, Maine, Lavin grew up in a musically talented family and started acting on stage at age 5. She attended the College of William & Mary, where she performed in many productions.

Actors’ Equity Association, the union representing live theater performers, paid tribute to Lavin on Instagram, calling her “a tremendous performer with a generous heart.” In 2023, the union awarded Lavin the Richard Seff Award for her performance in the off-Broadway play You Will Get Sick.



[View this post on Instagram](#)

A post shared by Actors’ Equity Association (@actorsequity)

Lavin later starred in Paul Rudnick’s The New Century.

“A star in every medium, but pure theatrical genius. Blissfully funny, deeply emotional, and

audiences adored her. She never disappointed: I worked with her, and just watching her rehearse and build a performance was an education and the greatest joy,” Rudnick, 67, [wrote via X](#).

Most nonsmokers have no early signs of lung cancer, which means it is often not diagnosed until it has spread to other parts of the body, a process known as metastasis.

In fact, [former YouTube CEO Susan Wojcicki died of non-small-cell lung cancer](#) this past August despite never smoking cigarettes and having almost no symptoms.

Smoking cigarettes is the leading risk factor for lung cancer. In addition, inhaling secondhand smoke can also cause lung cancer. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), 7,300 people who never smoked, like Wojcicki, die of lung cancer due to secondhand smoke each year.

In other related Cancer Health news, our spring 2024 cover story, “[The Young Ambassador for Women With Lung Cancer](#),” highlights Sydney Bamed, MD, a never smoker who was diagnosed with Stage IV non-small-cell lung cancer at age 33.