

Ways to Reduce Cancer Risk

Research shows that about one-fifth of all cancers diagnosed in the United States are attributable to being overweight or obese, being physically inactive, eating poorly, and drinking excessively. Based on current evidence, public health experts recommend that people:

Maintain a healthy weight

because 15 types of cancer have been causally linked to being obese or overweight.*



Limit consumption of “fast foods”

and other processed foods high in fat, simple starches, or added sugars because these contribute to weight gain without providing other nutrients.



Eat at least 30g of fiber and at least 400g of fruit and vegetables each day.

A diet rich in vegetables, fruits, whole grains, and beans has a low energy density and promotes healthy weight.



Limit intake of red meat (beef, pork, lamb) to no more than three servings a week (12 to 18 ounces a week) and consume very little or avoid processed meats

(e.g., hot dogs, bacon, and salami) because these foods can increase risk for colorectal and perhaps other cancers.



Be physically active

as part of everyday life because regular physical activity can decrease risk for nine types of cancer.



Limit alcoholic drinks, if

consumed at all, because alcohol consumption can increase risk for six types of cancer.



For mothers, **breastfeeding** after pregnancy (if feasible) can reduce breast cancer risk.



Limit intake of sugar-sweetened drinks because these lead to weight gain; drink mostly water.



Greater adherence to these recommendations has been shown to be associated with a reduced risk of all-cause, cancer-specific, and cardiovascular disease-related mortality among adults ages 50 to 71.

*Overweight and obesity are often assessed using body mass index (BMI): BMI between 18.5 and 24.9 kg/m² is considered healthy weight. However, it must be noted that the use of BMI has limitations as it is not an accurate measure of obesity or body fatness for all individuals. Researchers are currently investigating novel biomarkers that are better indicators of body fatness and predictive of cancer risk.