

Obesity-Related Cancers in West Virginia

Obesity and Cancer

An estimated 1 out of every 3 cancer deaths in the United States is linked to excess body weight, poor nutrition, and/or physical inactivity.¹ These factors are all related and may all contribute to cancer risk, but body weight seems to have the strongest evidence linking it to cancer.



When a person has a body mass index (BMI) greater than 30, they are classified as obese. Obesity increases the chances of developing type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and cancer. Being obese makes it harder to recover after being diagnosed with cancer, makes the cancer more aggressive, and increases the chances of cancer returning after surgery.

Use this tool to calculate your BMI:

http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/educational/lose_wt/BMI/bmicalc.htm

How does obesity increase cancer risk?

The primary way obesity leads to increased cancer risk is through the presence of greater numbers of fat storing tissue/cells. The presence of this tissue type increases factors that lead to cancer cell disease development and a higher circulation ability in the body, making it easier for cancer cells to grow and spread.

Several possible factors and methods have been suggested to explain the association of obesity with increased risk of some cancers:

- Inflammation in the body
- Cell and blood vessel growth
- Higher levels of certain hormones, such as insulin and estrogen, which can fuel cell growth
- Other factors that regulate cell growth

Research suggests that lower weight will reduce the risk of:

- Breast cancer (after menopause)
- Endometrial cancer
- Hormones related to cancer risk
 - Insulin
 - Estrogen
 - Androgens

Not smoking and maintaining a healthy weight are the most important steps you can take to prevent cancer.

Losing weight can have many other health benefits, such as lowering the risk of heart disease and diabetes.



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What are we doing to prevent obesity-related cancers?

The Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease (HPCD) partners with communities to improve walking environments and increase access to physical activity, community gardens, and farmers markets through policy, systems and environment changes.

HPCD and the Mountains of Hope Cancer Coalition provide mini-grants and technical assistance to improve the health of communities and work with healthcare providers to make referrals to community prevention and management programs that help improve the rates of obesity-related cancers in West Virginia.

Interventions and recommendations include:

- Limit television viewing, computer time and video gaming
- Provide safe and secure places to be physically active, like giving streets more sidewalks and bike lanes
- Support policies in schools and workplaces that promote physical activity
- Encourage individuals to get at least 150 minutes of physical activity per week
- Reduce consumption of sugar-sweetened beverages and provide healthier alternatives in schools, worksites, restaurants and communities
- Increase consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and nuts
- Limit sugar, solid fats, and alcohol
- Avoid high-calorie junk food and sweets
- Encourage breastfeeding and assure children have access to nutritious foods

For more information:

Division of Health Promotion and Chronic Disease

<https://dhhr.wv.gov/hpcd>

304-356-4193

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org/healthy

References:

1. American Cancer Society. Last Medical Review: 04/24/2015. Last Revised: 6/20. <https://www.cancer.org/content/dam/cancer-org/online-documents/en/pdf/infographics/body-weight-and-cancer-risk.pdf>

West Virginia Cancer Registry 2012-2020

Esophagus*	503
Colon and Rectum	5,666
Gallbladder	103
Pancreas	1,494
Kidney	2,358
Thyroid	1,651
Breast Post-Menopausal**	6,761

*Adenocarcinomas only. These are esophageal cancers shown to be linked to obesity.

**Defined as malignant breast cancer in women diagnosed at age 50 or greater.

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