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Body Weight and Cancer Risk



Gaining weight increases the chance of developing many diseases, including cancer.

Although overall cancer rates in the US are decreasing, cancers that are linked to overweight are on the rise, including:

- **Breast cancer**
 - **Colon cancer**
 - **Endometrium and uterus cancer**
 - **Esophageal cancer**
 - **Gallbladder cancer**
 - **Kidney cancer**
 - **Pancreatic cancer**
 - **Prostate cancer**
 - **Thyroid cancer**
 - **Head and neck cancers**
- Overweight can increase the risk for cancer in many ways. For example:
 - As we gain weight, fat cells grow. They may not receive enough oxygen to function well. These oxygen-starved cells make chemicals that cause inflammation. This increases the growth of other cells and may lead to cancer.
 - Gaining weight may cause estrogen and other hormones to be increased. This can make cancers develop and grow faster.
 - If you already have cancer, carrying extra weight can make it more likely for the cancer to metastasize, or spread, to other parts of the body.
 - What we eat is also important. Research has shown that eating whole grains, fruits, and vegetables can reduce your risk of certain cancers. Mediterranean-style dietary patterns and the DASH diet also reduce the risk of some types of cancer. If it's hard to eat healthy or lose weight, healthcare professionals can help you.
 - Consider working with a dietitian to help make lasting changes in what you eat.
 - Find a health coach or trainer to help you make a plan to be more active by doing activities that work for you.
 - Ask your healthcare provider if weight loss is important. In some cases, medications may help you manage your weight. People who are extremely overweight may consider bariatric surgery.
 - The good news is that even small amounts of weight loss can reduce your risk of cancer and other diseases. If you have had cancer, weight loss may reduce the risk of cancer returning.

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