

WCRF Blueprint for Lifestyle Changes to Prevent Cancer

Roxanne Nelson, BSN, RN

May 23, 2018

A new report that has reviewed all the data from the last 30 years on diet, weight, physical activity, and cancer has confirmed the link between cancer and lifestyle and provides evidence-based recommendations on how to reduce cancer risk.

The report distills the entirety of the literature down to 10 cancer prevention recommendations, said coauthor Nigel Brockton, PhD, director of research at the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR).

"Each of these recommendations is based on factors for which there is strong evidence for increasing or decreasing risk of cancer, and they form a blueprint for healthy living to reduce the risk of cancer," Brockton told *Medscape Medical News*.

They form a blueprint for healthy living to reduce the risk of cancer. Dr Nigel Brockton

Produced by the AICR and the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF), the new report is the third in a series. It reviews data from 51 million people, including 3.5 million cancer cases across 17 cancer sites.

It concludes that overweight or obesity is a cause of at least 12 cancers, as follows: liver, ovarian, prostate (advanced), stomach (cardia), oropharyngeal, colorectal, breast (postmenopausal), gallbladder, kidney, esophageal adenocarcinoma, pancreatic, and endometrial.

The third expert report, *Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Cancer: A Global Perspective*, updates the two previous comprehensive reports, which were published in 1997 and 2007.

Brockton emphasized that the evidence in the current report is stronger than ever but is "remarkably consistent" with the recommendations from the previous two papers. "The new report is based on much higher-quality data, mainly from prospective cohort studies and randomized controlled trials, the highest level of evidence."

Blueprint: The 10 Recommendations

"Our 10 recommendations form a blueprint for healthy living to reduce the risk of cancer," said Brockton. "The recommendations are practical and achievable steps that everyone can take to reduce their risk of cancer, and while any small steps that people can take will help, the recommendations are intended as an overall lifestyle package."

He emphasized that "there is good evidence that the more closely people follow them, the lower their risk of developing cancer."

The first recommendation is to be a healthy weight, given the particularly strong evidence that greater body fatness is a cause of many cancers.

The second two recommendations are to be physically active and to consume a diet that is rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruit, and beans. These steps both the risk for cancer as well as for weight gain and being overweight or obese.

The next four recommendations focus on limiting consumption of certain products, namely fast foods and other processed foods high in fat, starches, or sugars; red and processed meat; sugar-sweetened drinks; and alcohol intake.

The eighth recommendation is not to use high-dose dietary supplements for cancer prevention; instead, the goal should be to meet nutritional needs through diet alone.

The final two recommendations focus on specific population subgroups.

New mothers should breastfeed their babies, if possible. This recommendation aligns with that from the World Health Organization, which recommends that infants should be exclusively breastfed for 6 months, and then up to 2 years of age or beyond alongside appropriate complementary foods.

The other subgroup are individuals who have already received a cancer diagnosis. The report notes is the increased recognition of the potential importance of diet, nutrition, physical activity, and body weight in cancer survival.