

Guidelines on Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention

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RELEVANT TOPICS

The American Cancer Society published new guidelines focused on staying at a healthy weight, staying active throughout life, adhering to a healthy eating pattern, and avoiding or limiting alcohol.

New guidelines published by the American Cancer Society detailed recommendations on diet and physical activity for cancer prevention.¹

Published in *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*, the guidelines focus on staying at a healthy weight, staying active throughout life, adhering to a healthy eating pattern, and refraining from or reducing alcohol intake. Outside of smoking, the society suggested that these lifestyle habits are the most important that individuals can control and change to aid in lowering their risk of cancer.

“Indeed, in a recent analysis, the combination of these risk factors accounted for at least 18.2% of cancer cases and 15.8% of cancer deaths in the United States in 2014, the second highest percentages for any risk factor (after cigarette smoking) in both men and women,” the authors of the guidelines wrote. “These findings suggest that specific recommendations targeting these behaviors have tremendous potential to reduce the cancer burden.”

The updated guidelines are the latest evidence published by the American Cancer society since their last update in 2012. Changes to the guideline include:

- Getting to and remaining at a healthy body weight throughout life. Those who are overweight or obese could still lower their risk for some types of cancer by losing just a few pounds.
- As an adult, getting 150 to 300 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity per week, 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity physical activity per week, or a combination. However, getting 300 minutes or more will provide the most health benefits.
- As a child or teen, getting at least 1 hour of moderate or vigorous intensity activity every day.
- Spending less time sitting or lying down, including time spent looking at your phone, TV, etc.
- Consume a colorful variety of fruits and vegetables, as well as plenty of whole grains and brown rice.
- Avoiding or limiting the consumption of red meats, such as beef, pork, or lamb, and processed meats, such as bacon, sausage, deli meats, and hot dogs.
- Avoiding or limiting beverages high in sugar, highly processed foods, and refined grain products.
- Ideally, not drinking alcohol altogether. However, if you do, women should consume no more than 1 drink per day and men should consume no more than 2. A drink is considered 12 ounces of regular beer, 5 ounces of wine, or 1.5 ounces of 80-proof distilled spirits.

Laura Makaroff, DO, American Cancer Society senior vice president of Prevention and Early Detection, indicated that people should be eating whole foods, not individual nutrients, as evidence suggests that healthy dietary patterns are correlated with a reduced risk of cancer,

especially colorectal and breast cancers.² “There is no one food or even food group that is adequate to achieve a significant reduction in cancer risk,” Makaroff explained in a press release.

Additionally, the American Cancer Society addressed the implementation of public policy initiatives to support all individuals in adhering to these lifestyle habits in their updated guidelines. Policies that provide better access to healthy foods and beverages; supply information to consumers to support and facilitate healthier choices; reduce marketing, advertising, and accessibility to foods and beverages of little nutritional value; and institute standards for and boost funding for physical-activity related infrastructure in communities all have the opportunity to be effective in improving the detailed healthy lifestyle habits.

“Ensuring that all individuals have access to affordable, healthy food choices and opportunities for safe physical activity will require multiple strategies and bold action, ranging from the implementation of community, worksite, school, childcare, and other health promotion programs to policies that affect community planning, architecture, transportation, school-based physical education, food advertising and marketing, and food services,” the authors wrote.

Within the guidelines, answer to questions, such as information on genetically modified crops, gluten-free diets, juicing/cleanses, among other topics, were also included to help assist clinicians, public health professionals, and policymakers in addressing questions that often arise within the general public.

References:

1. Rock CL, Thomson C, Gansler T, et al. American Cancer Society Guideline for Diet and Physical Activity for Cancer Prevention. *CA Cancer J Clin*. doi:10.3322/caac.21591.
2. American Cancer Society. American Cancer Society Updates Guideline for Diet and Physical Activity. American Cancer Society website. Published June 9, 2020. [cancer.org/latest-news/american-cancer-society-updates-guideline-for-diet-and-physical-activity.html](https://www.cancer.org/latest-news/american-cancer-society-updates-guideline-for-diet-and-physical-activity.html). Accessed June 9, 2020.