

Exploring The Link Between Obesity And Cancer

(NAPSA)—Emerging research suggests a link between obesity and the risk of developing and dying from many common cancers. Obesity is quickly overtaking tobacco as the leading preventable cause of cancer, with as many as 84,000 cancer diagnoses attributed to obesity each year in the United States. It is also estimated that obesity or excess weight contributes to as many as one in five cancer-related deaths.

The good news is that scientists are beginning to understand potential biological explanations for why obesity contributes to the development and progression of cancer. For example, current research shows a relationship between higher levels of insulin in a person's blood, which is common in people who are obese, and the development of certain types of cancer.

In addition, hormones produced in fat cells have been shown to stimulate the growth of tumors, and it is also not unusual for people who are obese to have low-level chronic inflammation in tissues in the body. Chronic inflammation is a confirmed risk factor for certain types of cancers.

There is also existing data linking obesity, inactivity and poor diet to poorer outcomes in patients with cancer. Obesity is caused by a combination of factors, but it is never too late to take steps to improve your health.

Making Lifestyle Changes

The best time to start a weight loss program or focus on making healthy lifestyle changes varies for each person. For some, a cancer diagnosis may spur a patient's decision to focus on his or her health beyond cancer, encouraging healthy eating choices and increasing activity.

The first step is to talk with your doctor. Your doctor can calculate your body mass index (BMI) and evaluate your overall health and fitness level to find out if you



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would benefit from losing weight or making lifestyle changes to maintain your current weight.

Here are some additional tips from Cancer.Net for making healthy lifestyle changes:

- Eat and drink only as many calories as you need to maintain a healthy weight and support your level of physical activity. Talk to your health care provider about ways to reduce calories if your BMI shows that you are overweight or obese.

- Increase levels of physical activity. Even a small increase in physical activity has benefits.

- Get support. Most weight loss programs include more than one session with a dietitian or weight loss specialist to help you make healthy lifestyle changes and stick with them over time.

For more information and to download additional resources for patients and caregivers, visit www.cancer.net/obesity. Cancer.Net is the patient information website of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO), the world's leading professional organization representing physicians who care for people with cancer. Cancer.Net is supported by the Conquer Cancer Foundation.