

PRESS RELEASE:

Landmark Report: Excess Body Fat Causes Cancer

Panel Also Implicates Red Meat, Processed Meat and Alcohol

WASHINGTON, DC -- The evidence that excess body fat increases the risk of developing **cancer** is much stronger now than ever before, according to a landmark report issued today by the American Institute for **Cancer** Research (AICR) and the World **Cancer** Research Fund (WCRF). . Evidence linking consumption of alcohol, red meat and processed meat to increased risk is also deemed **convincing**.

Released today at a Washington news conference, the report - *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of **Cancer**: a Global Perspective* -- is the most comprehensive ever published on the evidence linking **cancer** risk to diet, physical activity and weight. The result of a five-year process involving nine independent teams of scientists from around the world, hundreds of peer reviewers, and 21 international experts who reviewed and analyzed over 7,000 large-scale studies, the report includes 10 recommendations for **cancer** prevention. The report is available online at www.dietandcancerreport.org <<http://www.dietandcancerreport.org>>

"The most striking finding in the report is that excess body fat increases risk for numerous **cancers**. That is why body weight is the focus of our first recommendation," expert panel member W. Phillip T. James, M.D., D.Sc., said today. James spoke at a press conference previewing the 517-page report published on November 1.

Body Fat Convincingly Linked to Six Cancers

Finding that the evidence is now **convincing** that carrying excess body fat increases risk for **cancer** of the colon, kidney, pancreas, adenocarcinoma of the esophagus and endometrium as well as post-menopausal breast **cancer**, the report recommends that people aim to stay within the healthy weight range (18.5 to 24.9) on the BMI chart throughout adult life. It further recommends staying as lean as possible within that range.

This recommendation is more stringent than AICR - and most other organizations - have previously issued on weight and reflects the stronger evidence that has emerged over the last few years. When the first AICR report was published in 1997, only the evidence linking body fat to endometrial **cancer** was judged to be convincing.

"The recommendation reflects what the science is telling us today. Even small amounts of excess body fat, especially if carried at the waist, increase risk," James said.

Because the evidence on weight gain is now so much stronger, the new report offers two evidence-based recommendations on how to avoid excess body fat. First, the report calls for limiting the intake of "energy-dense foods," especially processed foods high in added sugar, or low in fiber, or high in fat. Burgers, French fries, milk shakes and pastries were examples cited in the report, as were sugary drinks.

Second, the report advocates being physically active for at least 30 minutes each day. The evidence shows that physical activity offers a double bonus by reducing **cancer** risk in its own right while helping to maintain a healthy weight, which is also protective.

Panel Urges Limits on Red Meat

Compared to 1997, when AICR released its first global report on the association between diet and **cancer**, the new assessment finds the evidence linking red meat (beef, pork and lamb) to colorectal **cancer** is more **convincing** than it was a decade ago. Accordingly, AICR's expert panel recommends limiting consumption of red meat to 18 ounces (cooked) per week. Beyond

this amount, the evidence indicates, every 1.7 ounces of red meat consumed per day increases **cancer** risk by 15 percent.

The recommendation concerning processed meats is even more rigorous. Based on **convincing** evidence, the panel recommends avoiding processed meats such as bacon, ham, sausage and lunchmeat. After carefully examining all of the evidence, the panel was not able to find a level at which consumption of processed meat could be reliably considered completely safe. Every 1.7 ounces of processed meat consumed per day increases risk of colorectal **cancer** by 21 percent.

"That's why we recommend that if people eat processed meat at all, they save it for special occasions like ham at Christmas or the occasional hot dog at a baseball game," said James.

In a separate recommendation, the panel advises planning meals around non-starchy vegetables and fruits. These plant foods can be eaten in conjunction with foods of animal origin other than red meat, such as poultry, fish and eggs.

"We are recommending 5 servings or more of vegetables and fruit daily because, like physical activity, they pack a double whammy against **cancer**. **Probable** evidence indicates they help reduce **cancer** risk on their own, and as low-energy-dense foods, they help maintain a healthy weight, which the evidence shows has a big influence on **cancer** risk," James said.

Alcohol Consumption Linked to Cancer

The AICR expert panel found the evidence **convincing** that alcoholic drinks are linked to **cancers** of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, esophagus, as well as colorectal **cancer** in men and pre- and post-menopausal **cancer** in women. In addition, alcoholic drinks are a **probable** cause of liver **cancer** and of colorectal **cancer** in women.

"It doesn't matter whether you are talking about wine, beer or spirits, when it comes to **cancer**, even small amounts of alcohol raise your risk. In light of evidence suggesting that small amounts of alcohol protect against heart disease, however, the panel decided to recommend limiting rather than avoiding consumption," James said.

The full recommendation says, "If alcoholic drinks are consumed, limit consumption to no more than 2 drinks a day for men and 1 drink a day for women." The distinction has to do with differing body composition in the two sexes.

Recommendations Offer Pattern for Life

Although equally important, other recommendations involve special or limited populations:

- People concerned about risk of stomach **cancer** should reduce salt intake.
- People who currently look to supplements for **cancer** protection should instead try to get protective nutrients from whole foods.
- Mothers should breast feed when practical and babies should be breastfed.
- To reduce risk of recurrence, **cancer** survivors should follow the recommendations for **cancer** prevention.

"**Cancer** is preventable. There are changes you can make in your daily life that will reduce your chances of developing **cancer**," James said.

He pointed out that, taken together, the recommendations outline a clear and consistent way of living that fosters a longer healthy life.

"Let's get more vegetables, fruits and other low-energy-density foods every day, which will leave less room for meat. Let's get off our backsides however and whenever we can."

Accomplish these changes to diet and activity level and you are on your way to getting and staying as lean as possible, which is our first recommendation, he said.

"This is a pattern for living with the potential to save millions of lives. If these recommendations were adopted around the world, scientists estimate it could prevent about one-third of global **cancer** cases," James said.

Recommendations for Cancer Prevention

1. Be as lean as possible within the normal range of body weight.
2. Be physically active as part of everyday life.
3. Limit consumption of energy-dense foods. Avoid sugary drinks.
4. Eat mostly foods of plant origin.
5. Limit intake of red meat and avoid processed meat.
6. Limit alcoholic drinks.
7. Limit consumption of salt. Avoid moldy cereals (grains) or pulses (legumes).
8. Aim to meet nutritional needs through diet alone.

Special Population Recommendations

9. Mothers to breastfeed; children to be breastfed.
10. **Cancer** survivors to follow the recommendations for **cancer** prevention.

And always remember - do not smoke or chew tobacco.

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The American Institute for **Cancer** Research (AICR) is the **cancer** charity that fosters research on diet and **cancer** and educates the public about the results. It has contributed more than \$82 million for innovative research conducted at universities, hospitals and research centers across the country. AICR also provides a wide range of educational programs to help millions of Americans learn to make dietary changes for lower **cancer** risk. Its award-winning New American Plate program is presented in brochures, seminars and on its website, www.aicr.org <<http://www.aicr.org/site/PageServer?www.aicr.orgpagename=homepage>>. AICR is a member of the World **Cancer** Research Fund International.

PRESS RELEASE:

Report Reveals Convincing Links Between Growth Pattern, Cancer

WASHINGTON - The most comprehensive report on **cancer** prevention ever published shows that how the body grows is closely linked to one's **cancer** risk. The landmark American Institute for **Cancer** Research (AICR) report concluded that events that take place early in life greatly influence a person's **cancer** risk later on.

The result of a five-year process involving nine teams of scientists from around the world who reviewed and analyzed over 7,000 studies on all aspects of diet, physical activity, weight management and **cancer**, the report finds that factors such as birth weight, bearing children, breastfeeding, and even adult height all influence **cancer** risk. Understanding why these factors affect **cancer** risk, and how to put this information to use to prevent **cancer**, is an intriguing new direction for **cancer** research, authors of the report said today.

"We need to think about **cancer** as the product of many long-term influences, not as something that 'just happens,'" said Expert Panel Member Walter J. Willett, M.D., Ph.D., who announced the report findings at a Washington press conference today. Willett is one of 21 international experts who wrote the report, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of **Cancer**: a Global Perspective*. "Examining the causes of **cancer** this way, across the entire lifetime, is called the **life course approach**."

Early Factors Have Long-Term Implications on Cancer Risk

Among the findings of the AICR report is the association between **high birth weight** and the increased risk for **pre-menopausal breast cancer**. The reason for the link between weight at birth and breast **cancer** in adulthood likely has to do with body fat, according to AICR experts. Carrying excess body fat seems to change the body's hormonal environment in various ways. Ultimately, these changes make it more likely for cells to undergo the kind of abnormal growth that leads to **cancer**.

There is another early influence on long-term **cancer** risk that is indirectly associated with body fat. Girls who are overweight may start menstruating at an earlier age. This means that, over the course of their entire lifetime, they will experience more menstrual cycles. This extended lifelong exposure to estrogen is associated with increased risk for **post-menopausal** (but not pre-menopausal) **breast cancer**.

Breastfeeding Protects Both Mother and Child

The AICR Expert Report also provides some very positive news about the protective benefits of breastfeeding. According to the report, once a woman becomes sexually mature, having children, and breastfeeding those children, **convincingly** lowers her own risk of developing **breast cancer throughout her lifetime**. Equally important, the evidence shows that infants who are breastfed are likely to have a lower risk of becoming overweight or obese throughout their lives and this translates into a lower **cancer** risk.

"The evidence is uniformly strong on breastfeeding, and the fact that it offers **cancer** protection to both mothers and their children is why we made breastfeeding one of our **10 Recommendations to Prevent Cancer**," said Willett. The AICR Expert Report is the first **cancer** report to issue a recommendation on breastfeeding.

Cancer Risk, Like Tallness, is Determined by Many Factors

The observed association between body growth and **cancer** risk "makes sense," Willett said. Simply put, when cells divide and develop normally, the process is called **growth**. When cells divide abnormally, ignoring the body's inbuilt system of checks and balances, that uncontrolled growth is called **cancer**.

A combination of nutrition, hormones and genes determines how and when our cells divide, and thus how our bodies grow and develop. How tall we become, when growth spurts take place, and how our bodies store fat are all determined by this complex combination of influences. And this same set of influences can make **cancer** more or less likely.

According to the report, there is **convincing** evidence that people who are tall have a higher risk of colorectal and post-menopausal breast **cancer**.

"We found that tallness is also **probably** linked to increased risk for ovarian, pancreatic and pre-menopausal **cancer** as well," said Willett. He was careful to note that, although the association between height and **cancer** is **convincing**, a tall person is not destined to get **cancer**.

Tallness is an **indicator** of risk, not a cause of it, Willett said. "If you're tall, the Expert Report's 10 Recommendations for Lowering **Cancer** Risk are even **more** important to you, not less."

Focus on the Choices that Lower Risk

The same advice holds true for all people who find themselves at increased risk for **cancer** due to growth-related factors, including: adults who were never breastfed, women who started menstruating early; women who do not give birth, or who choose not to breastfeed the children they do have.

"Risk isn't fate," Willett said. "The evidence clearly shows that risk can be changed."

Men and women who have been overweight or obese throughout their lives are advised to gradually reduce the amount of body fat they carry over a period of months and years.

Willet presented evidence from a chapter of the 517-page WCRF/AICR Expert Report that was devoted to issues of growth and development in relation to **cancer** risk. At the press conference, a fellow member of the expert panel presented the Expert Panel's conclusions on other aspects of diet, physical activity and weight management, which took the form of 10 Recommendations for **Cancer** Prevention. The report is available online at www.dietandcancerreport.org <<http://www.dietandcancerreport.org>>

Willett noted that, with the notable exception of **breastfeeding**, the Report does not provide recommendations about the growth-related factors he outlined, because evidence is still emerging.

"We wanted to point these emerging links out because we now believe them to be more important than the scientific community, much less the public, has yet realized," Willett said. "Whether or not we get **cancer** has to do with our genes, and with the choices we make everyday. But what I'm highlighting today is that our **cancer** risk is also influenced by our **whole accumulated life experience**, from conception onwards."

And in the future, it may become possible to influence some of the growth-related risk factors that remain beyond our control today. Researchers are constantly learning more about how nutrition interacts with our genes, Willett said. But he stressed that scientists still aren't ready to design diets tailored to turn genes on and off, or to make cells grow and divide in specific ways that could make **cancer** less likely.

For now, he said, the best advice for everyone to follow is to focus on those factors they can control: diet, physical activity and weight. To that end, he summarized the main points of the Expert Report's Recommendations for **Cancer** Prevention.

"Get and stay lean. Be physically active for at least 30 minutes a day as part of everyday life. Eat a diet that's primarily composed of vegetables, fruits and other plant foods and limit meat. Limit or eliminate the consumption of alcohol.

"By following that advice, everyone - men, women, tall, short, overweight, lean - can reduce their chances of getting **cancer**."

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PRESS RELEASE

AICR Survey Uncovers Distorted Perceptions About What Causes Cancer

WASHINGTON - The most recent biennial survey commissioned by the American Institute for **Cancer** Research (AICR) shows that Americans rate **cancer** their number one health concern, believe it to be impossible to prevent, and continue to blame the disease on factors they cannot control.

"These are three distressing, interconnected trends, and they help to explain something we at AICR have been sensing for years," said AICR Nutrition Advisor Karen Collins, MS, RD. "Popular frustration about **cancer** is on the rise. An 'everything causes **cancer**' mindset is taking hold, which causes Americans to throw up their hands and overlook the steps that can lower their risk."

According to the 2007 AICR **Facts vs. Fears Survey**, which asked respondents about both proven and unproven risk factors for **cancer**, most Americans remain unaware that they can lower their **cancer** risk by changing their diet, getting more physical activity and managing their weight.

Meanwhile, awareness of proven risk factors remains low: only **36 percent** of adults in the United States realize that **diets high in red meat** increase **cancer** risk. This figure has remained steady since the first AICR survey in 2001.

This finding, like many revealed by the **Facts vs. Fears Survey**, contrasts sharply with the latest scientific consensus. According to a just-released AICR report, the evidence linking red meat to colorectal **cancer** is **convincing**.

AICR's Second Expert Report, *Food, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and the Prevention of **Cancer**: a Global Perspective*, is the most comprehensive scientific analysis of **cancer** prevention and causation ever undertaken. This landmark document, authored by an international expert panel, reviewed 7,000 research studies and classified the accumulated evidence for specific diet-**cancer** links. The report is online at www.dietandcancerreport.org <<http://www.dietandcancerreport.org>>

Survey Reveals Low Awareness of Real Risks

According to the AICR Expert Report, alcohol is **convincingly** linked to colorectal **cancer**, breast **cancer**, esophageal **cancer**, and **cancers** of the mouth, larynx and pharynx. Yet only 37 percent of respondents in the AICR survey identified alcohol as a risk factor.

Evidence linking excess body fat to **cancer** is one of the strongest findings to emerge from the new AICR Expert Report. The Expert Panel found **convincing** evidence that overweight and obesity increases risk for eight different **cancers**, including those of the colon, rectum and breast. And although the AICR surveys shows that popular awareness of this link increased dramatically between 2001 and 2003, it has since held steady, with less than half of Americans (**46 percent**) realizing that obesity increases **cancer** risk.

Some Good News Revealed in Survey

Awareness of two proven **cancer** risk factors - **insufficient physical activity** and **cured or processed meat** - remains low, but is trending up. Getting insufficient physical activity is convincingly linked to colon **cancer** in the new AICR Expert Report. Popular awareness of this link has jumped 8 percentage points, from just **35 percent** in 2005 to **43 percent** in 2007.

The link between colorectal **cancer** and **cured or processed meat** was also judged convincing by the AICR Expert Panel. It too experienced an eight-point jump in awareness between 2005 and 2007, but still only hovers at **38 percent**.

Cancer Outpaces Heart Disease for Top Health Concern

Americans ranked **cancer** their **number one** health concern. This year, **39 percent** of respondents rated **cancer** as their primary health concern, compared to **18 percent** who said they were most concerned about heart disease.

Even though **cancer** takes priority as a health concern, 1 out of 2 Americans (**49 percent**) believe it to be impossible or highly unlikely to prevent. According to the AICR Expert Report, however, making healthy changes to diet, activity level and weight can and do lower risk significantly.

Where Research is Lacking, Fears Take Over

Research has clearly established links between **cancer** and several diet-related factors we can control. Yet in the public's mind, those factors aren't registering as strongly as factors that are beyond our individual control. Americans consistently cite pesticides (71 percent) food additives (58 percent) and hormones in beef (49 percent) as causes of **cancer**.

The AICR Expert Panel, however, found the small amount of available research linking these factors to human **cancer** to be below the minimum standard for consideration.

"We continue to see a sharp disconnect between public fears - represented by the **Facts vs. Fears Survey** -- and scientific fact - represented by the AICR Expert Report," said Collins. "That's why it's so important to increase awareness about the steps proven to lower **cancer** risk."

The Facts vs. Fears Survey Table contains year-by-year breakdowns of survey responses with each potential risk factor ranked by popularity. The scientific evidence for each potential link has been classified as "convincing," "probable," "suggestive" or "no link."

Note: The 2007 AICR Facts vs. Fears Survey was conducted for AICR by International Communications Research, who phoned 1022 individuals aged 18 and over at random during the month of August. The full questionnaire and raw data are available from AICR. Contact Shannon Campbell at s.campbell@aicr.org <<mailto:s.campbell@aicr.org>>

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