

Heart-healthy lifestyle also reduces cancer risk

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Following the American Heart Association's Life's Simple 7 steps to reduce your risk for heart disease can also help prevent cancer, according to new research in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.

"We were gratified to know adherence to the Life's Simple 7 goals was also associated with reduced incidence of cancer," said Laura J. Rasmussen-Torvik, an assistant professor at the Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine in Chicago and lead author of the study. "This can help health professionals provide a clear, consistent message about the most important things people can do to protect their health and lower their overall risk for [chronic diseases](#)."

Adhering to six or seven of the factors reduced the risk of cancer by 51 percent, compared with participants who met none of the factors. Meeting four factors led to a 33 percent risk reduction and one or two 21 percent.

Life's Simple 7 is part of the association's My Life Check campaign that advises Americans to adhere to seven factors for a [healthy heart](#):

- Being physically active
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Eating a healthy diet
- Maintaining healthy [cholesterol levels](#)

- Keeping blood pressure down
- Regulating [blood sugar levels](#)
- Not smoking

When smoking status was not considered, participants who met five or six of the remaining six factors had a 25 percent lower cancer risk than those who met none.

"We're trying to help promote a comprehensive health message," Rasmussen-Torvik said. "Quitting smoking is very important, but there are other factors you need to be aware of if you want to live a healthy life."

Participants included 13,253 white and African-American men and women in the ongoing Atherosclerosis Risk in Communities Study, launched in 1987 in four U.S. communities. Participants were interviewed and examined at the start of the study to determine which [health factors](#) they met or followed.

About 20 years later, the researchers reviewed cancer registries and hospital records and determined that 2,880 of the participants ended up with cancer, primarily of the lung, colon or rectum, prostate and breast.

Non-melanoma skin cancers were not considered, and researchers didn't look at [cancer risk](#) factor changes over time.

"This adds to the strong body of literature suggesting that it's never too late to change, and that if you make changes like quitting smoking and improving your diet, you can reduce your risk for both cardiovascular disease and cancer," Rasmussen-Torvik said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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