

# A healthy lifestyle helps you survive bowel cancer

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Women diagnosed with colorectal cancer who are physically active, don't smoke and aren't overweight or obese have dramatically improved survival rates, according to a new study by the UWA-affiliated Western Australian Institute for Medical Research (WAIMR).

The research by Dr Terry Boyle, who works in the Epidemiology group under Professor Lin Fritschi at WAIMR, looked at 879 colorectal cancer patients diagnosed between 2005 and 2007.

Although both men and women took part in the study, Dr Boyle said the female patients showed the most pronounced results.

"We found that women's lifestyles during the years before they were diagnosed with colorectal cancer had a strong impact on their survival rate afterwards," Dr Boyle said.

"Women who were physically active were around 60% less likely to die during the follow-up period than inactive women," he said. "We also found that women who smoked were three times as likely to die from colorectal cancer compared with patients who had never smoked.

"Our figures also showed that overweight and obese women had almost twice the risk of dying, compared with women of a normal weight."

While the average colorectal [cancer patient](#) was diagnosed at around 65 years of age, the questionnaire asked about old and recent habits,

including the amount of physical activity performed recently and over the lifetime, smoking history, and height and weight at different ages.

"This study adds to a growing body of evidence indicating that [lifestyle factors](#), particularly physical activity, have an important role in the prognosis of colorectal cancer," Dr Boyle said.

The paper, "Lifestyle factors associated with survival after colorectal [cancer diagnosis](#)," has been published in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

Provided by University of Western Australia

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