

Cancer rate rise linked to lifestyle choices

June 23 2014



There has been a rise in rates of lifestyle-linked cancers in England.

Liver [cancer](#) rose substantially over the past decade - by 70 per cent among men and 60 per cent among women between 2003 and 2012. It now stands as the 18th most common form of cancer in the country, according to new figures by the Office for National Statistics (ONS).

Rates of [malignant melanoma](#), the most dangerous form of skin cancer, have risen by 78 per cent among men and 48 per cent among women over the same period. Now around 11,300 people are diagnosed with

malignant melanoma each year in England, making it the fifth most common cancer.

The main causes of [liver cancer](#) are tobacco, infections with hepatitis B and C ,and excess alcohol consumption.

Overexposure to the sun has for some time been known to be a major factor in skin cancer cases. Experts have attributed the rise in [skin cancer](#) to the popularity of package holidays over the last 50 years.

The ONS also said that rates of [lung cancer](#) – more than 8 out of ten cases of which are caused by smoking – increased by nearly a fifth (18 per cent) among women between 2003 and 2012, although they dropped by 8 per cent in men.

The figures suggest that thousands of cancer diagnoses could be avoided each year if the population cut down on cigarettes and alcohol, ate more healthily and reduced the amount of time they spent in the sun.

Nicola Smith, Cancer Research UK's health information officer, said: "This sharp increase in liver cancer is extremely worrying, but it's still a relatively uncommon cancer and there are clear lifestyle changes people can make to lower their risk.

"Cutting down on alcohol and not smoking can lower your risk, as can taking precautions against hepatitis C infection like not sharing needles and practising safe sex.

"The explosion in package holidays to hot European beaches dating from the late 60s is probably part of the reason malignant melanoma rates continue to go up as the disease can take decades to develop.

"It's vital to avoid sunburn, both at home and abroad, by spending time

in the shade when the sun is strongest, covering up and using at least SPF15 sunscreen for the parts of your body you can't cover."

Prostate, lung and bowel cancers remained were the most common cancers among English men in 2012, while the three most common cancers in women were breast, lung and bowel cancers.

Matt Wickenden, Cancer Research UK's senior statistical information officer, said that despite the rise there was cause for optimism, since survival rates had doubled over the last 40 years. "Half of all cancer patients will now survive the disease for at least 10 years," he said.

"Cancer Research UK wants to accelerate that progress over the next 20 years by increasing research on the early diagnosis of cancer and developing more effective, kinder treatments so that three-quarters of all patients will survive at least 10 years."

But, said Wickenden, the new figures showed clearly that it was vital to reduce smoking rates. "We're urging the Government to introduce plain, standardised tobacco packaging without delay to stop the next generation taking up the deadly habit that kills half of all long-term users.

More information: The study findings are available online: www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/vsob1/cancer-registrations-england-series-mb1-no-43-2012/stb-cancer-registrations-2012.html

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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