

Don't give up now—keeping your New Year's resolutions could reduce cancer risk

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The New Year is an excellent time to make resolutions for a healthier lifestyle - but by the end of the first week of January, even the best intentions may start to pall.

But research published this week in *ecancermedicalscience* may provide the motivation needed to stick with it - those hard-won healthy choices may lead to a total reduction of about one-third in [cancer](#) risk.

Researchers led by Professor Peter Elwood of Cardiff University, UK examined preliminary data from the UK Biobank, a prospective study of half a million subjects.

They sorted through the data to identify healthy behaviours - which include not smoking, maintaining a low BMI, participating in [regular physical activity](#), eating a [healthy diet](#) and limiting alcohol intake - and compared them to the risk of cancer over several years.

Together, the collection of healthy behaviors contributed to a total reduction of about one-third in [cancer risk](#) and possibly a greater reduction in cancer mortality.

These results may not sound surprising. Most people are aware that healthy behaviours have some general benefit - otherwise they wouldn't be "healthy." The real problem is translating the vague idea of lifestyle choices being "good" into useful evidence, which is what this study provides.

Next comes the challenge of translating this evidence to useful (and realistic!) recommendations.

"Perhaps the advice to take up one additional healthy behaviour is the most acceptable message for most subjects," says Professor Peter Elwood.

"In our study each additional healthy [behaviour](#) was associated with a reduction of about 8% in cancer, independent of the effects of the other behaviours."

"The take-home message is that healthy behaviours can have a truly tangible benefit."

Professor Elwood adds, "A [healthy lifestyle](#) has many benefits additional to cancer reduction - it costs nothing, has no undesirable side effects.... and is better than any pill!"

More information: Healthy living and cancer: evidence from UK Biobank, [DOI: 10.3332/ecancer.2018.792](https://doi.org/10.3332/ecancer.2018.792)

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