

Everyday changes to diet and exercise could avoid 26,000 cases of cancer a year in women

May 31 2018



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

Around 500 cases of cancer in women every week in the UK could be prevented by keeping a healthy weight and increasing exercise.

The latest figures, calculated from 2015 [cancer](#) data, found that whilst smoking remains the biggest preventable cause of cancer, everyday changes to live a little more healthily can have a large impact.

By keeping a [healthy weight](#), drinking less alcohol, eating more fibre, cutting down on processed meat and being more active, more than 26,000 cancer cases in [women](#) could be avoided each year. This equates to 15% of all cancers diagnosed in women each year in the UK. More than 24,000 cases of cancer in men could also be avoided with the same approach.

By upping their activity levels, women can help reduce their risk of two of the most common cancers, bowel and [breast cancer](#). Cancer Research UK is encouraging women across the UK to take part in a Race for Life this summer, as a great way to kick start a more active lifestyle. Race for Life is a series of women-only events which raises money for research into over 200 types of cancer affecting men, women and children.

Alison Cox, Cancer Research UK's director of prevention, said: "Whilst not smoking remains the most important way to reduce cancer risk, the impact of diet and exercise to keep a healthy weight cannot be ignored. These figures show the positive everyday steps we can each take to help reduce our individual risk. Leading a healthy life doesn't guarantee that a person won't get cancer, but it can stack the odds in your favour. We're also campaigning for the government to create an environment where it's easier for us all to live healthier lives, including a ban on junk food TV adverts before the 9pm watershed."

Holly Dowler, 28, decided to overhaul her lifestyle after seeing several family members be affected by cancer. Since last year, she has lost seven stone.

Holly says: "In 2006, when I was in my late teens I lost my nan and aunt

to cancer. Two years later another aunt was diagnosed with breast cancer. I've always worried about my likelihood of getting cancer as it's affected so many members of my family.

"I'd always been very overweight but after having my son, who's now three, I realised that I needed to lose weight to set a good example. I joined a slimming club, started going to the gym and discovered a love of running. I feel like a totally different person. I'm more active and have more zest for life. I thought 'Let's not give cancer any more chances with me – let's do something about it and help reduce my risk'."

Holly took part in a 10k Race for Life event in May.

More information: Katrina F. Brown et al. The fraction of cancer attributable to modifiable risk factors in England, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the United Kingdom in 2015, *British Journal of Cancer* (2018). [DOI: 10.1038/s41416-018-0029-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41416-018-0029-6)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

Citation: Everyday changes to diet and exercise could avoid 26,000 cases of cancer a year in women (2018, May 31) retrieved 14 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-05-everyday-diet-cases-cancer-year.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.