Obesity link to ELEVEN CANCERS: Millions of overweight Britons risk developing cancer

OVERWEIGHT people are at much greater risk of getting cancer, warns new research.

PUBLISHED: 06:30, Wed, Mar 1, 2017 | UPDATED: 08:35, Wed, Mar 1, 2017

The study found "strong evidence" to support the association between obesity and some major types of cancer, consisting mainly of those related to digestive organs and hormone-related malignancies.

The major review, published by The BMJ, showed the risk of developing [cancer](http://www.express.co.uk/latest/cancer) for every five kilo (11 lbs) increase in body mass index (BMI) ranged from nine per cent for bowel cancer among men, to 56 per cent for biliary tract system cancer.

GETTY

New research shows that overweight people are at a much greater risk of getting cancer

The risk of postmenopausal breast cancer among women who never used hormone replacement therapy (HRT) increased by 11 per cent for each five kilos of weight gain.

The risk of cancer of the womb increased by 21 per cent for each 0.1 increase in waist to hip ratio, according to the study.

The researchers said there could be associations between obesity and other cancers, but substantial uncertainty remains because the quality of evidence is not strong.

GETTY

Postmenopausal breast cancer among women increased by 11 per cent for each five kilos of weight gain

The international team, led by Doctors Maria Kyrgiou and Kostas Tsilidis from Imperial College London, called for more research.

Dr Kyrgiou said: "Evidence of the strength of the associations between obesity and cancer may allow finer selection of people at high risk, who could be selected for personalised primary and secondary prevention strategies."

She said cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide, while the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled over the past 40 years.

Previously published evidence supports the association between obesity and some cancers, but some may be flawed or biased due to weak study design or conduct.

GETTY

Researchers claim that obesity and cancer could be linked, although further evidence is needed

To determine the quality of evidence and the strength of the associations, the researchers conducted a comprehensive review of studies on obesity and the risk of developing cancer.

They identified 204 studies from 49 publications that analysed obesity measurements - such as BMI, weight gain, and waist circumference - and 36 cancers and their subtypes.

Of the 95 studies that included continuous obesity measures, only 13 per cent of associations were supported by strong evidence, meaning the studies had statistically significant results and no suggestion of bias.

Strong associations were found in studies that examined BMI with risk of oesophageal, bone marrow, and colon in men, rectal in men, biliary tract system, pancreatic, endometrial in premenopausal women, and kidney cancers.

Five additional associations were supported by strong evidence when categorical measures of obesity were used.

These included weight gain with risk of colorectal cancer and BMI with risk of gallbladder, gastric cardia, and ovarian cancers, and mortality from multiple myeloma.

But the researchers said no firm conclusions can be drawn about cause and effect when analysing observational studies.

Prof Graham Colditz, of Washington University School of Medicine who is one of the world's leading cancer experts, said of the findings: "Though some specifics remain to be worked out, the unavoidable conclusion from these data is that preventing excess adult weight gain can reduce the risk of cancer."

He added: "Given the critical role of health care providers in obesity screening and prevention, clinicians, particularly primary care clinicians, can be a powerful force to lower the burden of obesity related cancers as along with the many other chronic diseases linked to obesity such as diabetes, heart disease, and stroke."