Less than a stone of extra weight can boost cancer risk by half

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Gaining less than a stone in weight can increase people’s risk of cancer by more than 50 per cent, new research has found.

A major new review led by Imperial College London has concluded that being obese is linked to eleven different [cancers](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/), including oesophageal, stomach and bowel cancer, and is strongly associated with many others.

Published in the British Medical Journal, the study found that being 11 pounds (around 5kg,)heavier than a healthy [body-weight](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/07/britains-booming-restaurant-culture-fuels-record-childhood-obesity/) could boost a person’s risk of developing cancers of the liver and gallbladder by 56 per cent.

For men, it increased the risk of bowel cancer by nearly 10 per cent, and among postmenopausal women who had never used hormone replacement therapy it increased the risk by 11 per cent.

Public Health England welcomed the research but said less than half of the population realised that obesity made a person more likely to develop cancer.

The World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF), which funded the study, estimates that around 25,000 cancer cases could be prevented in the UK every year if everyone was a healthy weight.

The WCRF has previously identified most of the cancers as being linked to obesity, although multiple myeloma is a new one on the list.

Dr Panagiota Mitrou, the body’s director of research, said: “After not smoking, being a healthy weight is the most important thing people can do to reduce their cancer risk.”

"With obesity rates continuing to rise in the UK and worldwide, it is incredibly important that tackling the obesity epidemic be made an urgent priority."

The team identified 204 studies that looked at the link between body mass index (BMI), weight gain, and waist circumference, and 36 cancers and their sub-types.

Womb, ovary, kidney, oesophagus, stomach and rectum cancer were the others were a definitive link to unhealthy weight gain was shown.

In a linked BMJ editorial, Washington University academics Graham Colditz and Yikyung Park wrote: “Although 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.”

2018 will see the introduction of the Government’s Soft Drinks Industry Levy, known as the “sugar tax”, which will tax soft drinks manufacturers depending on the amount of sugar they use in their products.

The move is part of a drive to encourage children to consume less sugar.