**FAT CHANCE**

**Being obese increases your risk of these 11 cancers – in some cases by HALF – major review finds**

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28th February 2017, 11:30 pm

Updated: 1st March 2017, 8:00 pm

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**BEING fat increases the risk of developing 11 types of cancer – some by more than half – a major new study has found.**

There’s “strong evidence”  that going from a healthy weight to being obese is linked to a greater risk of the disease, researchers from Imperial College London found.

They reviewed 204 previous studies that examined associations between weight gain, body mass index, waist circumference and 36 cancers.

They conclude other links “may be genuine” but “substantial uncertainty remains”.

The risk is greatest for cancers of the digestive organs and parts of the body related to hormones.

The 11 cancers are oesophageal, colon, rectal, pancreatic, womb, kidney, multiple myeloma, breast, stomach, ovarian and biliary tract.

At the top end of the scale, the risk of biliary tract system cancer – a collective term for the liver, gall bladder and bile duct – increases by 56 per cent for every five unit rise in body mass index.

A five unit increase is enough to take someone from a healthy BMI of 20 to an overweight BMI of 25, or from an overweight BMI of 25 to an obese BMI of 30.

At the opposite end, every five unit increase in BMI raises the risk of colorectal cancer by 9 per cent.

The risk of postmenopausal breast cancer increased by 11 per cent for every 5kg (11lbs) of weight gained among women who had never used hormone replacement therapy.

And the risk of womb cancer increased by 21 per cent for each 0.1 increase in waist to hip ratio, the British Medical Journal reports.

Cancer is a leading cause of death worldwide and the prevalence of obesity has more than doubled over the past 40 years.

World Cancer Research Fund estimates 25,000 cases of cancer could be prevented every year in the UK alone if everyone was a healthy weight.

Leader researcher Maria Kyrgiou said: “As obesity becomes one of the greatest public health problems worldwide, 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.”

Dr Yikyung Park, from Washington University School of Medicine, said GPs should encourage fat people to slim to reduce the burden of cancer.

Writing in a linked comment article, she said: “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.

“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.”

Dr Panagiota Mitrou, from the WCRF, which funded the study, said: “This research further emphasises the huge role that obesity plays in increasing cancer risk.

“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 Obesity Health Alliance, a coalition of over 35 leading health charities, campaign groups and Royal Medical Colleges,…  
A spokesman said: “Obesity is a serious health concern and on top of being linked to major cancers, can also increase the risk of type 2 diabetes, heart and liver disease and mental health problems.

“With over a quarter of adults obese, and nearly one in three children overweight or obese by the time they leave primary school, we need bold action to help us all make healthier choices.

“This is why it’s so important to introduce measures like the Soft Drinks Industry Levy, reduce sugar, saturated fat and salt from everyday foods, and close loopholes to protect children from junk food marketing.”