

Lifestyle Can Thwart Cancer

MICHAEL DREGNI

Thirty-year mega study finds up to 48 percent of carcinoma could be prevented with healthy lifestyles.

Healthy behaviors could prevent a large proportion of cancer cases and deaths in the United States, according to a recent Harvard study published online by *JAMA Oncology*.

Researchers examined the lifestyles and medical records of more than 135,000 white male and female health professionals over a 30-year period. The participants were ranked by risk, and their data was analyzed to determine the associations between a “healthy lifestyle pattern” and carcinoma incidence and death.

Researchers found that 25 percent of cancer incidence and 48 percent of cancer mortality among women might have been prevented by lifestyle modifications. Among men, 33 percent of cancer incidence and 44 percent of cancer mortality could have been averted.

“These findings reinforce that primary prevention should remain a priority for cancer control,” says lead author Mingyang Song, MD, ScD, of Harvard Medical School.

These are the healthy lifestyle patterns the study identified, which any of us can start working toward today:

- Don't smoke (or quit if you do).
- Avoid heavy [alcohol consumption](#) (one drink a day for women and two drinks a day for men is OK).
- Exercise at a moderate intensity for at least 150 minutes weekly, or vigorously for at least 75 minutes.
- Maintain a BMI (body-mass index) of 27.5 or less.

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