

Lifestyle changes can help to cut cancer risk

FINDINGS SHOW THAT LIVING WELL DOES GET RESULTS

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CUTTING down on booze, red meat and fast food really does reduce the risk of cancer, a Newcastle study has found.

The research – co-authored by Newcastle University’s Dr Fiona Malcomson and published in the eminent journal *Cancer* – has found that following 10 World Cancer Research Fund and American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR) lifestyle-based recommendations has a tangible impact on lowering your cancer risk.

The more you follow the recommendations, which include maintaining a healthy weight and eating a diet rich in wholegrains, fruit, vegetables and pulses, the more you can cut your risk of getting illnesses such as bowel, breast and lung cancer.

Dr Malcomson and her team analysed a range of cancer prevention studies and scored how much a participant was following the advice.

For every point more that someone did so, they decreased their risk of bowel cancer by 12%, breast cancer by 11% and lung cancer by 8%.

Approximately 40% of all cancers are linked with modifiable lifestyle factors – such as physical inactivity, tobacco use, living with obesity, a poor diet, and alcohol intake, suggesting many cases are preventable.

Dr Malcomson said: “This is the first study to review the evidence to date on the impact of following the latest version of the World Cancer Research Fund and American Institute for Cancer Research Cancer Prevention Recommendations and the risk of developing cancer. Our findings are exciting as they provide further evidence of some of the best ways to reduce the risk of cancer, in particular breast, bowel, and lung cancers.

“By following these recommendations, people may reduce their risk of certain cancers, and we would recommend that people adhere to them as closely as possible.

“The evidence for the effects of lifestyle factors is stronger for certain cancers. For example, eating a lot of red and processed meat increases the risk of bowel cancer, and drinking alcohol can raise your risk of cancers such as breast, bowel, and oesophageal.

“However, there are other non-modifiable factors, such as a family history of cancer, and environmental exposures that can also affect people’s risk of developing the disease.”

Dr Panagiota Mitrou, Director of Research, Policy and Innovation at World Cancer Research Fund, said: “The more evidence we have demonstrating how following our recommendations as a pattern of behaviours can reduce cancer risk, such as having a healthy diet, keeping active and maintaining a healthy weight, the more we can support positive change.”