- Breast cancer

Warning of cancer risk from fat and alcohol

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WOMEN in their 30s and 40s should be warned about the risks of alcohol and excess fat to help cut their risk of breast cancer, research suggests.

A new study found that lifestyle factors known to increase the chances of developing cancer actually differ depending on which life stage women are at.

Experts already know that around a quarter of breast cancers could be prevented through healthy lifestyle changes, such as taking more exercise, maintaining a healthy weight and drinking less alcohol.

But in the latest research, experts found that key life stages are linked to particular risks, giving medics the opportunity to talk to women at the point changes could have the most impact.

Professor Marc Gunter, chairman in cancer epidemiology and prevention at Imperial College London, said: “Our study has shown that adolescence and early adulthood may be a particularly important time to encourage physical activity and help prevent rapid weight gain.

“Meanwhile, early to midadulthood, from around the 30s to 50s, could be a key period for tackling rising body mass index (BMI) and renewed increases in alcohol consumption.

“By identifying when these behaviour transitions are most likely to occur, the findings could help inform more tailored public health strategies aimed at reducing breast cancer risk across the population.”

For findings of the study, based on data from more than 110,000 women taking part in the Breast Cancer Now Generations Study showed how major breast cancer risk factors related to lifestyle, such as alcohol consumption, smoking, exercise and weight, change throughout the course of people’s lives.

While alcohol consumption, smoking and physical activity peaked in late adolescence, body fat steadily increased throughout adulthood, peaking in the late 60s. Women born between 1960 and 2003 generally had higher BMI trajectories.