

Obesity at Time of Cancer Diagnosis Brings Higher Risk for Second Cancer

Compared to cancer survivors with BMI in the normal range, those with obesity were 34% more likely to develop any second cancer.

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A new [study](#) led by researchers at [the American Cancer Society](#) (ACS) shows that older adult cancer survivors with excess body weight at the time of their first cancer diagnosis are at higher risk of developing a second cancer, especially an obesity-related cancer like breast or colorectal cancer. These findings have important public health implications given the high prevalence of cancer survivors with excess body weight.

The findings [were] presented at this year's annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in Chicago, May 31-June 4, 2024.

Researchers, led by [Dr. Clara Bodelon](#), senior principal scientist, survivorship research at the American Cancer Society, analyzed data among men and women enrolled in the Cancer Prevention Study II Nutrition cohort who were diagnosed with a first non-metastatic incident cancer between 1992 and 2015. Survivors were followed-up until 2017 for the diagnosis of a subsequent primary malignancy.

Outcomes of interest were any second cancers and obesity-related second cancer as defined by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC). Excess body weight was define using self-report body mass index (BMI). BMI was assessed prior to and after the first primary cancer diagnosis, but no major changes in BMI were observed during the follow-up period.

The results included 26,894 participants diagnosed with a first cancer. The median age at diagnosis of the first cancer was 72.2 years. Most participants were men (59%), overweight or obese (60%) and diagnosed with localized disease (71%). During a median of follow-up of 7.5 years, 3,749 participants were diagnosed with a second cancer, including 1,243 being diagnosed with obesity-related second cancers. Approximately 90% of second malignancies were diagnosed at least 1 year, and 70% at least 5 years after the first cancer.

Compared with cancer survivors whose BMI was in the normal range, those who were overweight or obese were at 15% and 34% increased risk of any second cancer and 40% and 78% increased risk of obesity-related cancers. In particular, obesity was associated with 39% increased risk of

breast second cancers and a two-fold increased risk of colorectal second cancers.

Researchers stress weight loss strategies should be considered and heightened awareness of second cancers among physicians caring for adult cancer survivors.

This [news release](#) was published by the American Cancer Society on May 28, 2024.

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