

Obesity, overweight and cancer

Obesity is associated with increased risk of cancer of the colon, breast (post-menopause), endometrium, kidney and oesophagus.



Trends in obesity and overweight

Children

- Between 1985 and 1997 levels of overweight doubled and obesity trebled among Australian children aged between 7 and 15 years.¹
- According to the last national survey in 1995 one in five Australian children was overweight or obese:
 - Highest prevalence was among boys aged 15-17 years (24.1%)
 - In children aged 7-15 years 4.7% of boys and 5.5% of girls were obese and a further 15.3% of boys and 16% of girls were overweight.²
- A 2004 NSW schools survey found the prevalence of overweight and obese students had increased to one in four (25%) in 2004, from 20% in 1997 and 11% in 1985.²
- Research in Victoria in 2003 involving 1001 primary school children aged 7-11 years reported that 26.7% were overweight or obese.³

Adults

- The AusDiab study estimated each day that there are 600 new cases of obesity in Australia and over the five year period of the study waistlines increased on average by 2.1cm and weight by 1.4kg.⁴
- A recent analysis of trend data from the Australian National Health Survey from 1989/90-2004/05 found that there has been significant increase in obesity and overweight over time:⁵
 - 1989/90 – 38.4%
 - 1995 – 45.5%
 - 2001 – 51.1%
 - 2004/05 – 54.5%

Cancer in Australia⁶

- 1 in 3 men and 1 in 4 women will be directly affected by cancer before the age of 75.
- In Australia each year, more than 88,000 new cases of cancer are diagnosed.
- Cancer is the leading cause of death in Australia – more than 36,000 people die from cancer each year.

Obesity and cancer

- 3% of cancer deaths in Australia are attributable to being overweight or obese.⁷
- Incidence of cancer attributable to being overweight or obese*:
 - 11% of colon cancer cases
 - 9% of post-menopausal breast cancer cases
 - 39% of endometrial cancer cases
 - 25% of renal cancer cases
 - 37% of oesophageal adenocarcinoma cases
 - 24% of gallbladder cancer cases⁸

*Data drawn from Boyle et al 2003 and based on Western Europe

References

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