

[IMAGE]

BMI and GI Cancer

By Editorial Staff

While body-mass index has been described as an imperfect measure of weight because it's based on weight relative to height (which doesn't account for body type, muscle vs. fat, etc.), if your BMI is high and you're not in great shape, your health risks are higher. Gastrointestinal cancer is one example. Nearly 35% of all cancer-related deaths worldwide are due to cancer in the GI tract, making it a significant public-health issue.

BMI and GI cancer appear to be related, particularly for people suffering from high body-mass index (classified as overweight or obese per the BMI). In a study involving more than 135,000 men and women, being overweight (per the BMI) at different stages of life (middle or later adulthood) increased the risk of developing a GI cancer (colorectal cancer or non-colorectal GI cancer). Being *obese* per the BMI in early, middle or later adulthood increased the risk of colorectal cancer specifically. BMI that increased over time also elevated the risk of colorectal and non-colorectal GI cancers.

Interestingly, this study, published in *JAMA Network Open*, also examined how aspirin use (frequency and quantity) impacted GI cancer risk in light of these findings. (The researchers note that the connection between inflammation and cancer suggests aspirin – an anti-inflammatory – may mitigate cancer risk.) However, that was not the case: "Our results indicate that individuals with overweight and obese BMIs had an increased risk of CRC and non-colorectal GI cancer with aspirin use 3 or more times per week, suggesting that aspirin may not be efficacious for prevention in overweight or obese states."

Do you know your BMI? If you're overweight or obese, you probably don't need to know. But you do need to know the health risks you could face, including an increased risk of GI cancer. Ask your doctor for help outlining a sensible, long-term plan to achieve the weight that's right for you and your health.

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