Obesity Facts:
Overweight/Obesity & Cancer Risk

**Being overweight or obese is a risk factor for cancer.**
The link between cancer and overweight/obesity is clear. Excess body weight is associated with an increased risk of at least 13 different cancers.¹

About 40% of all diagnosed cancers are linked to overweight/obesity.² However, less than a third of Americans realize that obesity increases cancer risk.³

**Cancer is the leading cause of death in Alaska.**

1 in 5 About 1 in every 5 deaths among Alaska adults is caused by cancer⁴

About 2 in 3 Alaska adults are overweight or obese⁵

Screen for cancer and maintain a healthy body weight.
Maintain a healthy body weight to reduce your risk of obesity-related cancer. Adults should receive regular screenings for colorectal, breast, and cervical cancer. Talk with your health care provider about appropriate cancer screenings and strategies to maintain a healthy body weight.

13 cancers are associated with overweight and obesity

**Cancers Associated with Overweight/Obesity**

**Breast Cancer**
Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer among Alaska women.⁶ Postmenopausal women who are overweight or obese have a 20% to 40% increased risk of breast cancer.⁷

**Colorectal Cancer**
Colorectal cancer is the third leading cancer diagnosed in Alaska, with rates nearly three times higher among Alaska Native people than white and Asian/Pacific Islander Alaskans.⁶ People who are obese are about 30% more at risk of colorectal cancer.⁷

**Kidney Cancer**
Kidney cancer is the fifth leading cause of cancer in Alaska.⁶ People who are overweight or obese are at almost twice the risk of the most common form of kidney cancer.⁷

**Pancreatic cancer**
Pancreatic cancer was the fourth leading cause of cancer death in Alaska between 2006-2015.⁸ People who are overweight or obese are at about 1.5 times greater risk of pancreatic cancer.⁷

**Liver cancer**
Liver cancer caused an estimated 454 deaths in Alaska between 1996-2015.⁹ People who are overweight or obese have up to twice the risk of liver cancer.⁷

**Esophageal cancer**
Esophageal cancer caused an estimated 444 deaths in Alaska between 1996-2015.⁹ People who are overweight or obese are at about twice the risk of esophageal cancer.⁷

Infographic from CDC Vital Signs - Cancer and Obesity.

www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic
What can we do?

Healthcare providers:
- Measure patients’ weight and height, and calculate their Body Mass Index (BMI).11
- Talk to patients about maintaining a healthy weight and explain that excess weight increases cancer risk.
- Connect patients to resources that will help them access healthy foods and be physically active.

Community partners and public health professionals:
- Partner to create safe communities where it’s easier to be physically active and choose healthy food options.

Individuals:

Reduce your risk of obesity-related cancer:
- Maintain a healthy body weight.12
- Choose healthy foods and drinks, including fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins. Limit sugary drinks, alcohol, and red or processed meats.12
- Be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day for children, and 150 minutes every week for adults.13

Other ways to reduce your cancer risk:
- Stay tobacco free or quit tobacco.12
- Protect yourself from the sun and avoid tanning beds.12
- Get vaccinated to prevent cancers related to human papillomavirus (HPV) and Hepatitis B virus.12
- Get appropriate cancer screenings, including:
  - a mammogram every two years for women ages 50-74.14
  - a Pap smear every three years for women ages 21-65. Between ages 30-65, this could be every five years with a negative HPV test.14
  - colorectal cancer screening ages 50-75, or beginning at age 40 if you’re Alaska Native or at higher risk.15

National Resources:

Learn more about obesity and cancer online:
- Centers for Disease Control, Cancer and Obesity: www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/obesity-cancer
- National Cancer Institute, Obesity and Cancer: www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/obesity/obesity-fact-sheet#q3

Alaska Resources:

Learn about obesity and cancer in Alaska:
- Alaska Cancer Control and Prevention: www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Cancer/
- Alaska Obesity Prevention and Control Program: www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Obesity/
- Play Every Day: www.playeveryday.alaska.gov

Learn more about tobacco prevention:
- Alaska Tobacco Prevention and Control Program: www.dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Chronic/Pages/Tobacco/
- Alaska’s Tobacco Quit Line: www.alaskaquitline.com
- Tobacco-Free Alaska: www.tobaccofree.alaska.gov

References
11. Find out more about measuring BMI with weight and height at: https://www.cdc.gov/healthweight/assessing/bmi/index.html

Publication date: March 2018