

Diet & Health Study News

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Dear Participant,

Happy New Year! The NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study is now in its 15th year and is still going strong thanks to your participation. Since the study began, we have published nearly 100 scientific articles. These publications have received a great deal of attention within the scientific community and the media.

In this issue of our annual newsletter, we share several important findings from articles published during 2009. For example, we highlight the results of our research looking at whether different physical activity levels influence the development of cancer. We also describe an article published about five lifestyle habits and how these habits are related to pancreatic cancer. These reports have helped us understand more about cancer and how it might be prevented. This information is a significant contribution to public health!

Without your participation, none of this would be possible. We invite you to visit the study website for news, contact information, and the complete list of articles from the study at <http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov/>.

Thank you for your continued time and participation in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study!

Arthur Schatzkin, M.D., Dr.P.H.
NIH-AARP Diet & Health Study



Physical Activity and Risk of Cancer

Participants from our study reported a wide variety of activity levels on study questionnaires. Using this information, researchers looked at activity levels and cancer outcomes. Results from the NIH-AARP Diet and Health study show that men and women who do regular vigorous physical activity had a 10%–20% lower risk of developing cancers of the colon, rectum, lung, and kidney. Also, women who were physically active after menopause had a lower risk of breast cancer than women who were not physically active. Researchers have published these results in a number of journal articles listed on the NIH-AARP study website. These studies suggest that being physically active may play an important role in preventing cancer.

In order to help Americans learn more about the level of physical activity adults should do, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has developed guidelines. The *2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* recommends the following amounts of exercise for adults to maintain good health:

- ✓ 2 hours and 30 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week by doing activities like brisk walking, ballroom dancing, or general gardening
- OR
- ✓ 1 hour and 15 minutes a week of vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity by doing exercise like jogging, aerobic dancing, and jumping rope
- OR
- ✓ A combination of these activities for an equivalent amount of time each week

These activities should be performed at least 10 minutes at a time. It is best to spread this exercise over the entire week.

These guidelines were developed for adults but may not be right for all older adults. The guidelines say that when older adults cannot do the recommended level of exercise every week because of health conditions, they should be as physically active as their abilities and conditions allow. We encourage all study participants to develop your own activity plan with your physician. Your plan should take into account your overall health status in order to safely do exercise. For a copy of the 2008 Physical Activity Guidelines, please go to the website at www.health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/summary.aspx.

A Healthy Lifestyle May Reduce the Risk of Pancreatic Cancer

Pancreatic cancer ranks as the 10th most common cancer in men and 9th most common in women in the United States. This cancer has received a lot of attention in the news lately following the deaths of some celebrities due to pancreatic cancer.

Prevention is the primary hope for reducing the burden of this disease. NIH-AARP researchers recently studied the influence of participants' lifestyle on pancreatic cancer risk. In the study, researchers scored participants according to five lifestyle factors: cigarette smoking, drinking alcohol, dietary quality, body mass index (a measure of leanness or obesity), and physical activity. Then they looked to see whether the scores were related to the development of pancreatic cancer. The study found that participants with the highest score for a healthy lifestyle had a 58% lower risk of developing pancreatic cancer than those who had the lowest score. This study provides added information about how your lifestyle can make a difference in your health.

Jiao L, Mitrou PN, Reedy J, Graubard BI, Hollenbeck AR, Schatzkin A, Stolzenberg-Solomon R. A Combined Healthy Lifestyle Score and Risk of Pancreatic Cancer in a Large Cohort Study. *Arch Intern Med* 2009;19:764–770.

Check Our Website

You can get up-to-date information about the study at our website:
<http://dietandhealth.cancer.gov>

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