

Study details link between obesity, carbs and esophageal cancer

Cases of esophageal cancer (adenocarcinoma) in the U.S. have risen in recent decades from 300,000 cases in 1973 to 2.1 million in 2001 at age-adjusted rates. A new study published in *The American Journal of Gastroenterology* shows that these rates in the U.S. closely mirrored trends of increased carbohydrate intake and obesity from 1973-2001.

The study illustrates what may be a public health concern as the composition of U.S. diets changes and total carbohydrate and refined carbohydrate intakes increase. Obesity is a risk factor for many types of cancer, and a diet that includes a high percentage of calories from refined carbohydrates is a common contributor to obesity. Carbohydrates were also unique in that no other studied nutrients were found to correlate with esophageal cancer rates.

The causes of esophageal cancer remain largely unknown. Despite recent advances in treatment, esophageal cancer has a poor prognosis. The five-year rate of survival for esophageal cancer remains below 20 percent and is the eighth-leading cause of cancer related death in American men.

“If we can reverse the trends in refined carbohydrate intake and obesity in the U.S., we may be able to reduce the incidence of esophageal cancer,” says Dr. Li Li, senior author of the study.

This study is published in *The American Journal of Gastroenterology*.

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