A diet rich in plant foods such as fruits and vegetables is associated with a lower risk of certain cancers. This type of diet also tends to be low in red and processed meats, which are associated with an increased risk of colorectal cancer. Alcohol increases the risk of cancer, and accounts for 4% of cancer deaths worldwide.

Overweight and obesity are associated with an increased risk of cancer. In addition, dietary factors and lifestyle factors can also have metabolic consequences (for example, hyperinsulinemia and inflammation), which could confer an increased risk of cancer.

Overweight and obesity are associated with an increased risk for certain cancers. Overweight and obesity are increasing in countries at all income levels. Emerging evidence also indicates that being overweight is associated with an increased risk of cancer recurrence and decreased overall survival.

Physical activity alone (regardless of body weight, diet, and other factors) is associated with a reduced risk of certain cancers. Because physical activity helps prevent excess body weight, it also contributes to reduced risk of cancers associated with overweight and obesity. Thirty-one percent of adults worldwide do not meet the World Health Organization recommendation of 150 minutes of moderate physical activity or the equivalent each week.

While research is ongoing to better understand the roles of these risk factors in cancer development, findings to date indicate that these factors can each individually affect cancer risk.

A healthy diet and body weight, together with recommended levels of physical activity, can significantly reduce the risk of developing and dying from cancer.

"If we could give every individual the right amount of nourishment and exercise, not too little and not too much, we would have found the safest way to health." — Hippocrates

In some countries, physical inactivity accounts for a substantial proportion of colon cancer cases. For some cancer sites, excess body weight accounts for a large proportion of cases.