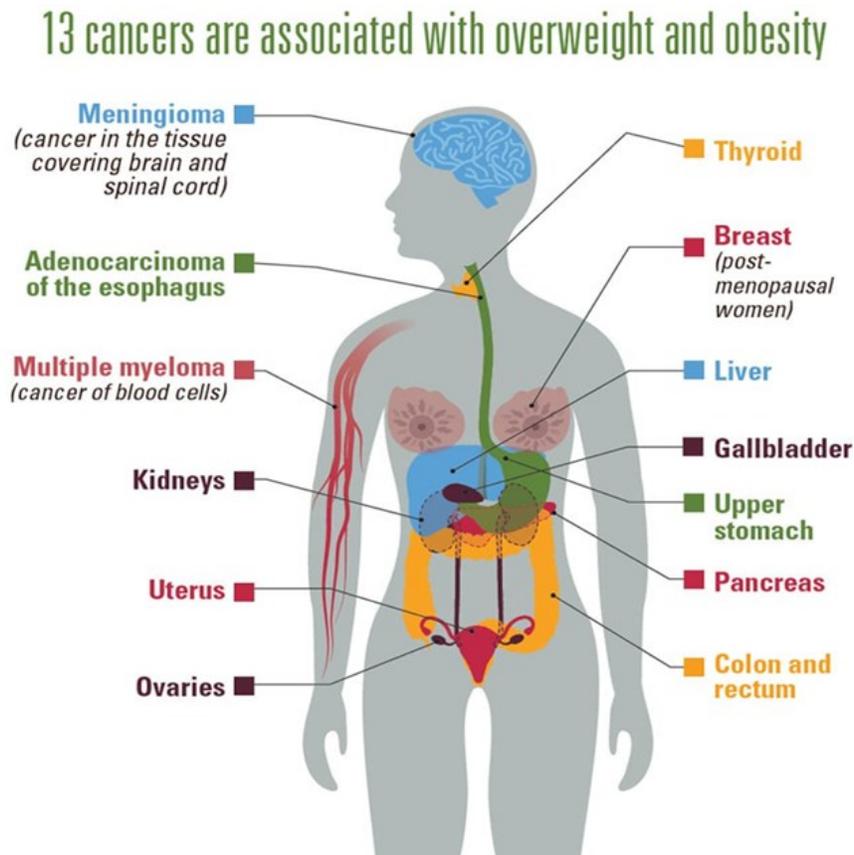


What is Obesity Related Cancer?

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, being overweight/obese is linked to a higher risk of potentially being diagnosed with 13 types of cancer; directly related to higher body fat levels. These cancers make up 40% of all diagnosed cancers in the United States. These types of cancers can be found in the graphic below.¹



Quick Facts

- Obesity refers to a BMI of 30 or higher. According to America's Health Rankings, 38.4% of Indiana adults have a BMI of 30+ and are considered to have obesity, (2024 data) compared to the United States average of 34.2%.²
- Indiana has higher rates(4 out of 13) of obesity related cancers when compared to the United States in 2018-2022. These include cancers of the: pancreas, colon and rectum, ovary, and kidney.³
- Food deserts (areas where fresh, nutritious food is not readily available) are a major contributing factor to the inability of individuals to maintain a healthy diet; unhealthy diets are large contributing factors to obesity and increased cancer risk. In Indiana, roughly 22% of residents are living in food deserts.⁴

Obesity and Cancer Risk Correlation

Obesity is directly related to an increased cancer risk. According to The National Cancer Institute, obesity causes changes in one's body that might increase the risk of some cancers such as:⁵

- Hormone changes with higher estrogen and insulin levels (due to excess fat tissue)
- Chronic Inflammation (promotes tumor growth)
- Insulin Resistance
- Cell growth stimulation or inhibition
- Fat cells directly or indirectly affecting how the body uses/stores energy
- Impaired tumor immunity— immune system not effectively attacking cancer cells
- Less effective screening methods (i.e. cervical cancer screening for obese women)

Prevention

- Maintain a healthy weight
- Regular physical activity levels
- Maintain a balanced diet (i.e. incorporation of fruits, vegetables, fibers, etc.)
- Monitoring sugar intake along with overconsumption of processed or red meats
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Get recommended cancer screenings
- Talk regularly with your doctor if you are concerned you are overweight or have obesity

References

1. "Obesity and Cancer." *U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*. 11 June 2025. https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/risk-factors/obesity.html?CDC_AAref_Val=https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/obesity/index.htm
2. "Obesity in Indiana." *America's Health Rankings United Health Foundation*. <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/measures/obesity/IN>
3. U.S. Cancer Statistics Working Group. U.S. Cancer Statistics Data Visualizations Tool. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Cancer Institute; <https://www.cdc.gov/cancer/dataviz>, released in June 2025.
4. Flood, Tracy. "FH Indianapolis—Food Access Report." *Franciscan Health*. 05 Nov 2019. <https://www.broadstreet.io/board/pubboard/Qm9hcmRDYXJkVXNITm9kZT00NzUwNTQ=>
5. "Obesity and Cancer." *National Cancer Institute*. <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/obesity/obesity-fact-sheet>