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IARC Handbooks of Cancer Prevention Volume 16: Body Fatness

For Volume 16 of the IARC Handbooks, we convened a group of international experts, who reviewed more than 1000 studies to evaluate the link between absence of body fatness and a possible cancer-preventing effect. So, the link between obesity and cancer has been known for a long time. However, there's many studies published since the previous evaluation. Also, obesity has become a worldwide epidemic. So we thought it was necessary to review the new studies and evaluate them with the IARC procedures.

The group of experts confirmed that there is a link between excess of body fatness and a certain number of cancers, namely cancer of the colon and rectum, cancer of the oesophagus, cancer of the kidney, cancer of the breast in postmenopausal women, and cancer of the endometrium of the uterus. In addition, they concluded that there's eight additional sites for which there is also a link between excess of body fatness and cancer. These sites are the gastric cardia (a part of the stomach close to the oesophagus), cancer of the liver, of the gallbladder, of the pancreas, of the ovary, cancer of the thyroid, and meningioma (a type of brain tumour) as well as multiple myeloma.

Obesity is linked to many types of diseases, including cancer. This evaluation is important because it has increased the number of cancer sites for which there is a link between obesity and cancer. This evaluation can be used by the administrative, health, and national governments to set up action plans to reduce this epidemic.