

Obesity and cancer

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Two studies on obesity and cancer released results this week. One study showed leukemia cells finding a safe haven in the fat tissue of obese mice, and the other study predicts that obesity could be the leading cause of cancer in women in the future.

The [leukemia study](#), published online by *Cancer Research*, was inspired by an earlier study which showed that obese children have a 50 percent higher chance of recurrence of acute lymphoblastic leukemia than lean children. Researchers developed obese mice with leukemia and treated the mice with traditional chemotherapy used in children. Compared with the normal mice with leukemia, the obese mice had a higher relapse rate. Upon closer examination of the relapsed mice, researchers found leukemia cells hiding in the fat tissue, protected from the chemotherapy. This may explain why obese people often have poorer prognoses in not only leukemia but other cancers as well.

In the [second study](#), European researchers found cancer could be attributed to obesity in about 124,000 cases in 2008. In men, 3.2 percent of cancers were caused by obesity, but in women the number was higher at 8.6 percent. These findings were announced at a joint meeting of the European Cancer Organization and the European Society for Medical Oncology where lead researcher Andrew Renehan, MD, said, "As more people stop smoking and fewer women take hormone replacement therapy, it is possible that obesity may become the biggest attributable cause of cancer in women in the next decade."

These studies and other research will hopefully help us understand the connection between obesity and certain cancers and will encourage more patients, survivors, and health care providers to make losing weight not just a suggestion but a prescription for fighting cancer.