

# Healthy living helps ward off deadly prostate cancers in men at high risk

April 12 2021, by Robert Preidt

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A nutritious diet, regular exercise and other components of a healthy

lifestyle may reduce the odds of lethal prostate cancer in men with a high genetic risk for it, researchers report.

"The excess genetic risk of lethal [prostate cancer](#) could be offset by adhering to a healthy lifestyle," concluded co-lead author Anna Plym. She's a postdoctoral research fellow at Brigham and Women's Hospital and Harvard T. H. Chan School of Public Health in Boston.

Genetics account for about 58% of variability in [prostate cancer risk](#).

Researchers looked at nearly 10,500 men for whom [genetic data](#) were available.

They also identified more than 2,100 [prostate cancer](#) cases over a median follow-up of 18 years and nearly 240 lethal prostate cancer cases over a median follow-up of 22 years. (Median means half were followed for less time, half for more.)

The study grouped men into four equal groups. Men in the group with the highest genetic-based risk were 5.4 times more likely to develop prostate cancer and 3.5 times more likely to develop lethal prostate cancer than those in the group with the lowest genetic risk.

Among men in the high-risk group, those with the healthiest lifestyles were about half as likely to develop lethal prostate cancer as those with the least healthy habits, the study found.

High-risk men who had a healthy lifestyle at the start of the study had a lifetime lethal prostate cancer incidence of 3%. That compared to 6% for high-risk men with the least healthy lifestyle, and 3% for the study population as a whole.

The findings were presented during the American Association for

Cancer Research (AACR) virtual annual meeting, held from April 10-15.

"Our findings add to current evidence suggesting that men with a high genetic risk may benefit from a targeted prostate cancer screening program, aiming at detecting a potentially lethal prostate cancer while it is still curable," Plym said in an AACR news release.

A healthy lifestyle was not associated with a [lower risk](#) of getting any type of prostate cancer, and did not affect men with a lower genetic risk for the disease, the research team stressed.

Plym said more study is needed to learn why a [healthy lifestyle](#) is associated with a lower chance of lethal prostate cancer in men with a high genetic risk.

One possible explanation: Gene variants that contribute to increased genetic risk also have the strongest links with lifestyle.

But Plym noted that the observational study does not prove cause and effect, only that there is an association between lifestyle and risk. As well, research presented at meetings is typically considered preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

**More information:** The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more on [prostate cancer prevention](#).

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