

Key research findings from the Nurses' Health Studies



	Breast cancer	Coronary heart disease (CHD) & stroke	Colon cancer	Hip fracture	Cognitive function	Eye disease
Cigarette smoking	No relation with past or current smoking	Increases risk of CHD and stroke; risk reduced within 2-4 years of smoking cessation	Increases risk of colon cancer	Increases risk of hip fracture for current smokers	Not examined	Increases risk of cataracts and “wet” AMD (a severe form of Age-related Macular Degeneration)
Oral contraceptives	Current use increases risk; past use no association	Current use increases risk; past use no association	Reduces risk of colon cancer	Not examined	Not examined	Reduces risk of “wet” AMD
Post-menopausal hormone therapy	>5 years of estrogen plus progestin use increases risk; >10 years of estrogen only use increases risk	Current use increases risk of stroke, and among recently menopausal women may reduce the risk of CHD	Reduces risk of colon cancer	Current use reduces risk of hip fracture	No relation to cognitive function	Current use reduces risk of high-tension glaucoma and “wet” AMD
Obesity	Increases risk for menopausal women; weight loss after menopause is associated with reduced risk	Increases risk of CHD and stroke; weight gain after age 18 increases risk of stroke and CHD	Increases risk of colon cancer	Reduces risk of hip fracture, in large part due to extra padding around the hips	Not examined	Increases risk of cataracts and AMD
Alcohol	One or more drinks per day increases risk	Moderate alcohol intake reduces the risk of CHD	≥2 drinks per day increases risk	High consumption increases risk of hip fracture	Moderate intake reduces risk of cognitive impairment	No relation to age-related eye diseases
Diet	Higher intake of red meat increases risk of premenopausal breast cancer	Mediterranean diet reduces risk of CHD and stroke; fish intake reduces risk of stroke; nuts and whole grains reduce risk of CHD; refined carbohydrates and trans fats increase risk	Folate, vitamin B6, calcium, and vitamin D intake reduce risk; red and processed meat intake increase risk	Reduced risk with calcium supplement use among women with low-calcium diets; higher dietary calcium intake has no effect; vitamin D intake reduces risk and retinol increases risk	Higher vegetable intake, especially green leafy vegetables, reduces risk of cognitive impairment	Some antioxidants reduce risk of cataracts and AMD; higher intake of fish reduces risk of cataracts and AMD

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Physical activity	Moderate physical activity reduces risk and improves survival in breast cancer patients	Physical activity, including walking, reduces risk of CHD and stroke	Physical activity reduces risk	Physical activity, including walking, reduces risk of hip fracture	Moderate physical activity reduces risk of cognitive impairment	No relation to age-related eye diseases
Other exposures	Family history of breast cancer, high breast density, high circulating hormone levels, and shift work all increase risk	Snoring is associated with a modest but significantly increased risk of CHD and stroke	>10 years of aspirin use reduces risk; family history increases risk	Diabetes and increasing years spent working rotating night shifts increase risk	Type 2 diabetes and higher insulin, even in women without diabetes, increase risk	Diabetes increases risk of glaucoma and cataracts; positive family history and African heritage increases risk of glaucoma