

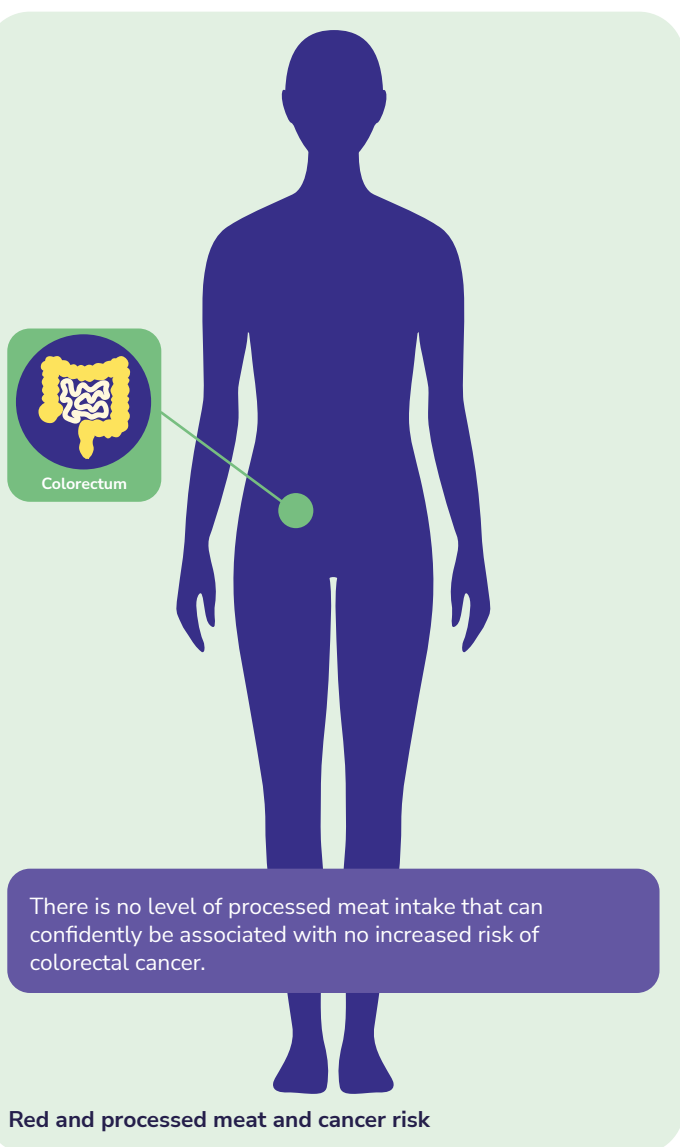
POLICY FACTSHEET

Red and processed meat and cancer prevention

The World Cancer Research Fund's Cancer Prevention Recommendations advise everyone to limit consumption of red and processed meat as part of everyday life to lower cancer risk¹ and to support living well with and beyond cancer².

This factsheet outlines how this recommendation can be rolled out at a population level. It expands advice in World Cancer Research Fund International's Policy Blueprint for cancer prevention, which combines evidence on cancer risk – our Cancer Prevention Recommendations – with policy advice for population-level prevention.

Globally, production and consumption of all types of meat has increased substantially in the last 50 years, and it is anticipated to increase by a further 50% by 2050³.



CANCER PREVENTION RECOMMENDATION:

Limit consumption of red and processed meat

- Eat no more than moderate amounts of red meat such as beef, pork and lamb
- Eat little, if any, processed meat

For more details, see: wcrf.org/evidence-for-our-recommendations/limit-red-processed-meat

There are 6 key policy areas to support healthy environments for limiting red and processed meat:



Marketing restrictions



Fiscal and legal policies



Healthy and safe schools



Effectively inform people



Procurement, planning and incentives in communities



Counselling in healthcare

Unlocking the co-benefits of cancer prevention policies

Our policy recommendations have proven co-benefits in relation to prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), meeting sustainability targets, reversing health inequities, addressing commercial determinants of health and fulfilling human rights. World Cancer Research Fund International's Policy Blueprint for cancer prevention includes an assessment of co-benefits and potential trade-offs when policy goals do not align.

wcrf.org/blueprint-for-cancer-prevention

Marketing restrictions



- Advertising ban of foods high in fat, sugars and salt and identifiable less healthy products, online and on TV.
- Restrictions on other types of marketing such as product placement, branding and multi-buy offers.
- Restrictions on sponsorship of sporting events by fast-food and sugary drinks companies.

Fiscal and legal tools



- Taxes on foods high in fat, sugar and salt, regularly adjusted to inflation.
- Subsidies to improve accessibility of healthy foods.

Healthy and safe schools and other settings



- High quality nutrition standards for school meals, appropriately monitored.
- Restrictions on unhealthy snack food and drinks available in schools canteens, kiosks, vending machines and school events, including sporting events.
- Universal free or subsidised healthy school meals, including provisions for school holidays.

An integrated strategy which together addresses the influence of diet, weight, breastfeeding, physical activity and alcohol consumption will have a greater impact on cancer risk and survivorship than individual factors alone. For more information, visit wcrf.org/blueprint-for-cancer-prevention

Procurement, planning and incentives in communities



- Nutrition standards for public procurement that ensure compliance with healthy diets.
- Incentives and regulations with robust monitoring and enforcement to reduce “less healthy” food and ingredients used by food producers and retailers and in food service outlets.

Effectively inform people



- Robust front-of-pack food labelling that shows recommendations and judgements on the healthiness of a product and is based on a government-approved nutrient profile model.
- Improved nutrition education in schools and for educators.

Counselling in healthcare



- Nutrition counselling in primary care.
- Nutrition training for health professionals.



Strategies to support policies on processed foods

- Ensure that procurement and social protection policies with a role in ensuring food security follow dietary guidelines in regard to consumption levels of red meat and exclude processed meat.
- Include health impacts in any trade or commercial agreements with red and processed meat producers.
- Follow international guidance, including the WHO NCD Best Buys⁴.

Our other resources for policy-makers, health professionals and the general public

Resources for policy-makers

- NOURISHING nutrition policy database policydatabase.wcrf.org
- NOURISHING nutrition policy index for Europe and country snapshots wcrf.org/policy/nutrition-policy



Building Momentum reports:

- Lessons on implementing robust restrictions of food and non-alcoholic beverage marketing to children
- Lessons on implementing a robust front-of-pack food label
- Lessons on implementing a robust sugar-sweetened beverage tax
wcrf.org/policy/our-publications/building-momentum-series

Resources for health professionals and the general public

- wcrf.org/living-well
- aicr.org/resources/media-library
- Resources in Dutch wkof.nl



References

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2. Shams-White MM, Brockton NT, Mitrou P, Kahle LL, Reedy J. The 2018 World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research (WCRF/AICR) Score and All-Cause, Cancer, and Cardiovascular Disease Mortality Risk: A Longitudinal Analysis in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study. *Curr Dev Nutr*. 2022;6(6):nzac096.
3. Red and processed meat in the context of health and the environment: many shades of red and green. Information brief. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2023.
4. World Health Organization. Tackling NCDs: best buys and other recommended interventions for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. World Health Organization; 2024.

About us

World Cancer Research Fund International is a leading authority on the links between diet, nutrition, weight and physical activity and cancer. We are an international not-for-profit association that leads and unifies a network of cancer prevention charities, including the American Institute for Cancer Research, World Cancer Research Fund in the UK and Wereld Kanker Onderzoek Fonds in the Netherlands. World Cancer Research Fund International is in official relations with the World Health Organization.

Acknowledgements

For a full list of acknowledgements please scan the QR code.



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