



Health

### Tumors, with prevention possible savings of 20 billion euros per year

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#### Brian Dales Offerta Nat

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If having read the data from the latest Aiom Report just a few days ago which shows an increase of 18,400 new cases of cancer in 2023 wasn't a strong enough lever, to induce us to change habits and truly implement the 'rules of good live' which are the heart of prevention, here also come the numbers on the costs linked to cancer. As many as 20 billion euros were spent in 2022 in Italy to treat cancer patients, including direct costs of therapies, hospitalizations, surgeries, tests, rehabilitation and indirect costs (absence from work, family assistance, etc.). Huge figures that also tell of the

burden of the disease on the individual and on the universe around him. Social and [health](#) costs and above all a new active prevention strategy that can reverse the trend were discussed during a national conference promoted by Cnel, the Aiom Foundation and the Bioscience Foundation.

#### A tsunami of new cases

The latest 'Cancer numbers 2023' report presented a few days ago shows how in the last three years, cancer cases have increased by 5%, going from 376,600 new diagnoses in 2020 to 395,000 this year. As many as 18,400 more new diagnoses and unfortunately the trend is destined to worsen: it is estimated, in fact, that in the next two decades, the absolute annual number of new oncological diagnoses in our country will increase, on average every year, by 1.3% in men and 0.6% in women. "The costs linked to planet cancer are becoming enormous in all Western countries – he underlines Francesco Riva, Delegate President of the Cnel Regulation Board. "We risk undermining the sustainability of the entire system and making citizens

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## Bad habits that increase cancer risk

A worsening linked above all to incorrect lifestyles (cigarette smoking, obesity, sedentary lifestyle, excessive alcohol consumption) and which generates [health costs](#). "The indicators tell us that too little is still being done: sedentary lifestyle, overweight and obese people and heavy alcohol consumers are increasing – he explains **Saverio Cinieri**, president of the Aiom Foundation. What is worrying is that this data, which is so dangerous, is very widespread among adolescents." Also expressing concern **Francesco Cognetti**, president of Foc who declares: "Incorrect lifestyles are on the rise: just think of the 6% increase (from 23% to 29%) in completely sedentary people and the increase in those who are overweight and obese. Operational plans based on the European Beating Cancer Act model that integrate the National Oncology Plan are essential."

## How prevention evolves

It is important, therefore, to reduce the burden of disease through prevention, but after years of awareness campaigns on correct lifestyles, experts have been working for years on a new concept of prevention based on research and the identification of prodromal factors that can over the years lead to cancer. It is the so-called 'Cancer Driver Interception', i.e. the search for those alterations which, if not corrected, can favor carcinogenesis. "It is not enough to insist on lifestyles: we need to look for the prodromal factors that can favor the birth of a neoplasm," he underlines **Adriana Albini**, collaborator of the Scientific Directorate of the European Institute of Oncology in Milan and global coordinator of the Working Group on Cancer Prevention of the American Association for Cancer Research (Aacr).

[See also Circulation, here are ten foods that are good for you](#)

## The four factors at the origin of risk

There are now numerous clinical studies that have demonstrated the usefulness of measuring some prodromal factors: "These include genomic instability, chronic inflammation, intestinal dysbiosis and imbalance of the immune system. All measurable through blood tests and biological material", continues Albini. But how exactly does this risk measurement work? "The tumor takes years to develop – he replies **Giuseppe Mucci**, president of the Bioscience Foundation, born from a spin off of the Tor Vergata University of Rome. Today it is possible to monitor these alterations with simple tests that can reveal negative prodromal conditions which can then be corrected with healthy lifestyles. Active prevention, therefore, as is done in the cardiovascular field by controlling blood pressure or hypercholesterolemia".

## Active prevention also for cancer patients

Active prevention is valuable even when you have already received a cancer diagnosis. "Active prevention is also essential for those who have already encountered the disease, he adds **Antonella Campana** of IncontraDonna Foundation. "Following correct lifestyles affects everyone and promoting effective awareness campaigns is now a priority. Even if we have known the risk factors for some time and know how much damage they can do, we cannot reverse the trend. Perhaps we should look for new ways of communication to reach more effectively, especially the younger ones."

## Institutional collaborations

Many studies have indicated the effectiveness of this already operational approach, but the first steps are now being taken in Italy. "We are starting a collaboration with the Istituto Superiore di Sanità to launch a concrete project in some regions with an innovative Italian model at the forefront in the [world](#)", concludes Mucci. "The collaboration with the Istituto Superiore di Sanità represents a partnership that I strongly wanted – underlines the Senator **Francesco Zaffini**, president of the 10th Commission on Social Affairs,

"This conference - he concludes Riva - represents the opportunity to present the imminent start of work on the bill dedicated to the prevention of cancer and raising awareness of lifestyles and [health](#) literacy. The interest in this topic is very strong and will see the active participation of the ministries: Sport and Youth, [Health](#), Education, University and Research and Sport and [Health](#) to create synergy and participation under the guidance of the Cnel which can represent a guarantee of quality and result".

