

Unraveling the mystery of why cancer is soaring among people under 50

Cancer is hitting more young people in the U.S. and around the globe, baffling doctors. Diagnosis rates in the U.S. rose in 2019 to 107.8 cases per 100,000 people under 50, up 12.8% from 95.6 in 2000, federal data show. A study [in BMJ Oncology](#) last year reported a sharp global rise in cancers in people under 50, with the highest rates in North America, Australia and Western Europe.

Doctors are racing to figure out what is making them sick, and how to identify young people who are at high risk.

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Deep-fried and highly processed foods have been [implicated in other studies](#) of early onset colorectal cancer, while diets with fiber, fruits and vegetables likely lower risks. Cancers including colorectal, breast and pancreatic have been tied to obesity, and studies [support](#) a link between excess weight and some early onset cancers.

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Some doctors suspect that cancer-causing exposures might have started during patients' childhoods, something that is difficult to trace. Unlike when smoking drove up lung cancer deaths in the 20th century, doctors suspect there isn't a single carcinogen responsible for the current trends.

"Is it part of a larger trend of, are we just getting unhealthier?" said Dr. Sachin Apte, chief clinical officer at Huntsman Cancer Institute at the University of Utah.

screenshot on the unknown

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