

AICR's Federal Priorities:

Research and Policies for Cancer Prevention and Survivorship

The [American Institute for Cancer Research \(AICR\)](#) is a U.S.-based non-profit organization that champions the most authoritative research on cancer prevention and survival through diet, weight, and physical activity. AICR is part of the [World Cancer Research Fund International \(WCRF\)](#), a global network of cancer charities that share the same mission and leadership.

AICR recognizes the pivotal role that U.S. federal lawmakers play in achieving our mission of reducing preventable cancer and increasing survivorship. Thus, AICR advocates for legislation and regulations that provide federal funding, evidence-based policies, and access to information and interventions that prevent cancer and improve outcomes for cancer survivors.

The Cancer Burden

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in the U.S. and one of the most expensive health conditions.¹ An estimated 1.8 million people in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer in 2020 alone, and nearly 40 percent of people will be diagnosed at some point in their lifetime.^{2,3} This deadly disease is also taking a substantial toll on an already overburdened healthcare system; the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality estimates that, in 2015, cancer care costs in the United States were more than \$80.2 billion.⁴

Fortunately, about 40 percent of cancer cases can be prevented.^{5,6} Eating a healthy diet, being active each day and maintaining a healthy weight are, along with avoiding tobacco, the most important ways to reduce cancer risk.⁷ In 2018, AICR and WCRF released their Third Expert Report, *Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer: A Global Perspective*, the world's most comprehensive



scientific report on these issues to date. According to this report, being overweight or obese increases the risk for 12 types of cancer: esophagus, pancreas, colon and rectum, endometrium, kidney, postmenopausal breast, gallbladder, ovarian, liver, prostate (advanced), stomach, and mouth/ larynx/ pharynx.⁷ AICR's research shows that including more whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables in your diet and limiting intake of red and processed meats, alcohol, and foods high in sugar, fats, and starches can reduce your risk of gaining weight and/or your cancer risk.⁷ Physical

activity can protect against postmenopausal breast, endometrial and colorectal cancers, regardless of weight.⁷ Physical activity and a healthy body weight can also increase chances of survival and improve quality of life among breast cancer patients.⁷

Overview of Policy Priorities

AICR has identified four policy priorities that are important for helping people make informed choices to reduce their cancer risk and improve cancer survival. They include:

- **Nutrition labels and claims that make it easier to identify healthy options;**
- **Government guidelines for food, nutrition, and physical activity programs that are based on cancer prevention research;**
- **Government funding for cancer research, with an emphasis on prevention; and**
- **Access to diet, physical activity, and weight loss counseling and other treatments following a cancer diagnosis.**



These policies align with the strategies in [WCRF's NOURISHING framework](#), which recognizes that policy actions are needed in the environment, food system, and behavior change communications to promote healthy diets and reduce obesity.

Nutrition Labeling

NEW LABEL / WHAT'S DIFFERENT

Servings: larger, bolder type

Serving sizes updated

Calories: larger type

Updated daily values

New: added sugars

Change in nutrients required

Actual amounts declared

New footnote

Nutrition Facts	
8 servings per container	
Serving size 2/3 cup (55g)	
Amount per serving	
Calories	230
% Daily Value*	
Total Fat 9g	10%
Saturated Fat 1g	2%
Trans Fat 0g	
Cholesterol 0mg	0%
Sodium 160mg	7%
Total Carbohydrate 37g	13%
Dietary Fiber 4g	14%
Total Sugars 12g	20%
Includes 10g Added Sugars	
Protein 3g	
Vitamin D 2mcg	10%
Calcium 260mg	20%
Iron 8mg	45%
Potassium 235mg	6%

* The % Daily Value (DV) tells you how much a nutrient in a serving of food contributes to a daily diet. 2,000 calories a day is used for general nutrition advice.

AICR advocates for nutrition labels and claims that make it easier to identify healthy food and beverage options. **AICR supports federal requirements for menu labeling in chain restaurants and other food retailers, and the updated Nutrition Facts label.** The updated Nutrition Facts label, required to be on most food packages by January 1, 2020, reflects current nutrition science regarding the relationship between diet and chronic disease. The updated label highlights information about calories and serving size that are important for managing weight, and provides new information about added sugar content. **AICR is committed to supporting the U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) by providing educational opportunities, including a [recent webinar](#), that assist consumers in understanding and using the new label to make food and drink choices that align with AICR's Cancer Prevention Recommendations.**

Source: Food and Drug Administration

AICR also supports FDA's [Nutrition Innovation Strategy](#), which is focused on reducing chronic diseases, such as cancer, through good nutrition. So far, AICR has [provided comments](#) to FDA on one component of this strategy, food Standards of Identity (SOI) Modernization, urging them to ensure that any changes to the SOI align with AICR's Cancer Prevention Recommendations. More specifically, **AICR recommends improving SOI and front-of-package labeling for grain products to enable consumers to more easily identify products rich in whole grains.**

Looking toward the future, AICR urges FDA to make other regulatory changes that make it easier for people to choose – and incentivize food manufacturers to create – healthier options. **AICR supports changes to the requirements for use of the term “healthy” and other label claims. AICR urges FDA to take further action in these areas and plans to provide input through the regulatory process.**

Dietary & Physical Activity Guidelines

AICR champions the latest and most authoritative research on diet, obesity, physical activity and cancer, and advocates that the federal *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans* reflect this research.

AICR is pleased that the 2018 Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee included cancer experts, and the [2018 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#) recognize the benefits of an active lifestyle for cancer prevention and survivorship. **AICR supports policies that make it easier for people of all ages to get enough physical activity to reduce the risk of cancer, promote a healthy weight, and achieve a myriad of other health benefits.**

The *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* form the basis of all federal food and nutrition policies, programs, and communications. This includes the school lunches that nearly 30 million students eat each day,⁸ the educational programs that support healthy choices for the more than 34 million people receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits,⁹ and the My Plate educational resources for building a healthy meal. The Dietary Guidelines also inform many state and local government and private sector nutrition guidelines. **AICR is closely monitoring the process to develop the 2020-2025 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and has submitted [multiple comment letters](#) to the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee (DGAC). AICR [has been a leader](#) in advocating that the Dietary Guidelines reflect the growing body of evidence on the link between diet and cancer risk. We will continue to provide input to the Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee and the federal agencies as the process to update the Dietary Guidelines moves forward.**

Cancer Research Funding

The National Cancer Institute (NCI), one of 27 federal research institutes that comprise the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is the largest funder of cancer research in the world. The FY 2020 federal budget provides \$41.46 billion for NIH, a \$2.6 billion increase over the prior year's funding. This includes \$6.44 billion for the NCI, a \$297 million increase over FY 2019 funding levels, including both regular and Cancer Moonshot appropriations.¹⁰

Thanks in part to cancer research funded through NCI, the rate of new cancer cases has declined 29 percent from 1991 to 2017. This includes a 2.2 percent decrease from 2016 to 2017, the largest single-year decline in history.¹¹ However, not all population groups have benefitted equally, and rates of preventable cancers among certain populations remain high. Rising rates of obesity also threaten to derail this progress, as excess body weight is responsible for nearly 5 percent of all cancers in men and nearly 11 percent of all cancers in women, along with 6.5 percent of cancer deaths.¹²

AICR is a member of [One Voice Against Cancer \(OVAC\)](#) and the [Ad Hoc Group for Medical Research](#), serving as part of a collective voice advocating for increased federal funding for cancer and biomedical research. AICR will advocate for continued increases in funding with an emphasis on cancer prevention and lifestyle risk factors. For FY 2021, the cancer and biomedical research community seeks \$44.7 billion for the NIH, a \$3 billion increase over FY 2020.

While AICR has invested more than \$109 million in cancer research, increased federal funding is needed to accelerate research on the impact of lifestyle factors on cancer prevention and survivorship and identify best practices to influence behavior change.

Access to Lifestyle Interventions for Cancer Survivors

Evidence showing the benefits of a healthy diet, physical activity, and healthy weight for cancer survivors is growing. AICR's research has found that - for breast cancer survivors - physical activity, a healthy body weight, and a healthy diet reduce the risk of recurrence and death either from cancer or another cause.¹³ Physical activity also provides benefits for improved physical, social, psychological, and spiritual quality of life.¹⁴ AICR recommends all cancer survivors follow the recommendations for cancer prevention, if possible.

Currently, there is no requirement for coverage of diet and physical activity interventions for people with a cancer diagnosis. As a result, access to lifestyle interventions for cancer survivors varies widely. Accessibility often depends on where the person receives oncology care, whether the care is provided in

an inpatient or outpatient setting, and their ability to pay.^{15, 16} **AICR advocates for access to evidence-based interventions to promote a healthy lifestyle before, during, and after cancer treatment. As cancer survivors' needs vary,¹⁷ interventions that are specifically tailored for cancer survivors, and broader programs and services, should be available in health care settings, in communities, and virtually. AICR is exploring innovative opportunities to leverage lessons learned from other lifestyle interventions and trends in health care payment and delivery to move this agenda forward.**

Conclusion

Federal policy is essential for providing life-saving research, evidence-based guidelines, useful and consumer-friendly information, and supportive interventions that make it easier to lead a healthy lifestyle for cancer prevention and survivorship. AICR looks forward to working with Members of Congress from both parties and Administration officials to advance policies that achieve these goals.

For more information about AICR's federal policy activity and how you can get involved, please visit <https://www.aicr.org/impact/policy-advocacy> or contact k.kiefer@aicr.org.

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