

## Internet Use and Cancer-Preventive Behaviors in Older Adults: Findings from a Longitudinal Cohort Study

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### Abstract

**Background:** The Internet is a key provider of health information, but little is known about its associations with cancer-preventive behaviors. This study investigated the associations between Internet use and cancer-preventive behaviors among older adults.

**Methods:** Data were taken from Waves 1 to 5 (2002–2011) of the English Longitudinal Study of Aging, a cohort study of men and women 50 years or older in England, United Kingdom. Internet use was recorded at each wave. Breast and colorectal screening, fruit and vegetable consumption, physical activity, and smoking were recorded at Wave 5. Social, cognitive, and physical function variables recorded at Wave 1 were analyzed as predictors of Internet use and included as covariates in analyses linking Internet use to behavior.

**Results:** Of 5,943 respondents, 41.4% did not report any Internet use, 38.3% reported using it in one to three waves ("intermittent users"), and 20.3% used it in all waves ("consistent users"). Internet use was higher in younger, male, White, wealthier, more educated respondents, and those without physical limitations. **Multivariable analysis showed that consistent users were more likely than "never users" to report CRC screening, weekly moderate/vigorous physical activity, and five or more daily servings of fruit and vegetables, and less likely to report smoking.** There was no significant association between Internet use and breast screening.

**Conclusions:** **Internet use showed a quantitative association with cancer-preventive behaviors even after controlling for various social, cognitive, and physical correlates of Internet use.**

**Impact:** Promoting Internet use among older adults from all backgrounds could contribute to improving cancer outcomes and reducing inequalities. *Cancer Epidemiol Biomarkers Prev*; 22(11); 2066–74. ©2013 AACR.