

Too little folate may risk colon cancer

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Canadian scientists say a mouse-based study suggests too little folate in the diet might increase the risk of colon cancer.

The McGill University researchers found a diet low in folic acid -- a B vitamin -- apparently increased the animal subject's risk of colorectal cancer. Scientists posit a similar deficiency might play a role in the human form of the disease.

"We found tumors in the mice that were on the low-folate diet and no tumors in mice that were on the regular diet," said geneticist Rima Rozen, scientific director of the Montreal Children's Hospital and the study's lead investigator.

Rozen said several large human-population studies have also suggested low intake of folic acid, which is found in leafy green vegetables and citrus fruits, might be associated with an increased risk of colon cancer.

The scientists said they used mice so as to carefully control possible contributing factors, including environment and diet.

Rozen suggests people be certain to get the recommended daily allowance of 400 micrograms of folic acid by eating foods such as broccoli, spinach and orange juice or by taking a multivitamin.

The study appears in the current issue of *Cancer Research*.

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