

# Barrett's patients who smoke twice as likely to develop oesophageal cancer

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Smoking doubles the risk of developing oesophageal cancer in people with Barrett's Oesophagus, according to scientists at Queen's University Belfast and the Northern Ireland Cancer Registry.

Affecting one in every 100 people in the UK, Barrett's Oesophagus is a disorder in which the lining of the oesophagus is damaged by [stomach acid](#) and is changed to a lining similar to that of the stomach.

The research, published in *Gastroenterology*, the official journal of the American Gastroenterological Association, was carried out over 13 years and involved over 3000 Barrett's patients. It found that those who smoked tobacco were twice as likely to develop [cancer](#) of the oesophagus, than those who did not.

Dr Helen Coleman from the Centre for Public Health in Queen's School of Medicine, Dentistry and Biomedical Sciences led the study. She said: "We found that [tobacco smoking](#) emerged as the strongest lifestyle risk factor for [cancer progression](#) for patients with Barrett's Oesophagus. The risk of developing this cancer doubled for those who were smoking tobacco. One of the most interesting observations was that someone who smoked less than one pack a day was still as likely to develop cancer as those who smoked many more."

The study was the first of its kind worldwide in terms of size by taking a sample of over 3000 patients. Researchers were able to get information about smoking at the time a person was first diagnosed with Barrett's

Oesophagus to see how this influenced cancer risk years later. This is important for reducing bias known to be associated with asking patients about their smoking habits in the past.

Although these findings need to be confirmed in future studies, the study's researchers suggest that tobacco smoking should be discouraged and smoking-cessation strategies considered in Barrett's Oesophagus patients in order to reduce future [cancer risk](#).

Provided by Queen's University Belfast

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