

Processed meat may increase pancreatic cancer risk

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(Medical Xpress) -- Eating too much processed meat may increase the risk of pancreatic cancer, according to new research published in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

The study, funded by the Swedish Cancer Foundation and Karolinska Institutet in Stockholm, Sweden, found that for each 50 grams of processed meat eaten every day – equivalent to a sausage or two rashers of bacon – there was a 19 per cent rise in the risk of pancreatic cancer compared to those who ate no meat.

Pancreatic [cancer risk](#) increased by 38 per cent and 57 per cent for people who eat 100 grams per day and 150 grams per day of processed meat respectively, compared to those who eat none.

Those who ate 100 grams per day of processed meat had a 19 per cent higher risk of pancreatic cancer compared to those who ate 50 grams a day.

The evidence for [red meat](#) was inconclusive with an increase in risk for men but not for women. The results showed that there was a 29 per cent increase in pancreatic cancer risk for men who ate 120 grams per day of red meat compared to those who ate no meat. This may be because men in the study tended to eat more red meat than women.

Although a 19 per cent increase in pancreatic cancer risk from eating processed meat may seem high – it is an increase on top of a

comparatively small risk of developing pancreatic cancer. In the UK, the lifetime risk of developing pancreatic cancer is 1 in 77 for men and 1 in 79 for women.

In comparison, smoking increases the risk of developing pancreatic cancer by 74 per cent.

The researchers analysed the results of 11 studies involving over 6,000 people with pancreatic cancer.

Associate Professor Susanna Larsson, study author based at the Karolinska Institutet, said: “Pancreatic cancer has poor survival rates. So as well as diagnosing it early, it’s important to understand what can increase the risk of this disease.

“If diet does affect pancreatic cancer then this could influence public health campaigns to help reduce the number of cases of this disease developing in the first place.”

About 8,090 people were diagnosed with the disease in the UK in 2008 – three per cent of all cancer cases -- and around 7,780 people died from it.

Sara Hiom, director of information at Cancer Research UK, said: “The jury is still out as to whether meat is a definite risk factor for pancreatic cancer and more large studies are needed to confirm this. But this new analysis suggests [processed meat](#) may be playing a role.

“We do know that, among lifestyle factors, smoking significantly ramps up the [risk](#) of [pancreatic cancer](#). Stopping smoking is the best way to reduce your chances of developing many types of cancer and other diseases as well.”

More information: *British Journal of Cancer* (2012) [DOI: 10.1038/bjc.2011.585](https://doi.org/10.1038/bjc.2011.585)

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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