

Poor diet may spur inflammation-related health problems

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Eating too much sugar and unhealthy fats linked to cancer and early death in study.

(HealthDay)—People with diets that promote inflammation—such as those high in sugar and saturated fats—are at increased risk for early death from all causes, including gastrointestinal tract cancers, a new study suggests.

Gastrointestinal tract cancers include cancers of the esophagus, stomach, colon and rectum.

"Studies have shown that [diet](#) can modify inflammation, and inflammation can drive the growth of many cancers, such as colorectal cancer," study co-author Susan Steck, an associate professor at the University of South Carolina, said in a news release from the American

Institute for Cancer Research.

This new study included more than 10,500 people who were followed from 1987 through 2003. By the end of that time, more than 250 of the participants had died, including 30 from gastrointestinal tract cancers.

Those with diets most strongly associated with inflammation were 53 percent more likely to die early from all causes than those with the most anti-inflammatory diets. The risk of death from gastrointestinal tract cancers was four times higher among people with diets most likely to cause inflammation than among those with the most anti-inflammatory diets, such as plant-based diets.

The findings were presented Nov. 7 at the annual meeting of the American Institute for Cancer Research, in Bethesda, Md. The data and conclusions of the study should be viewed as preliminary until published in a peer-reviewed journal.

"This study adds support to the recommendations to consume a more anti-inflammatory diet, rich in plant-based foods that contain numerous anti-inflammatory nutrients and phytochemicals," study lead author Fred Tabung, a doctoral candidate in epidemiology at the University of South Carolina, said in the news release.

"Due to the small number of [gastrointestinal tract](#) cancers in our study, our finding needs to be confirmed in larger ... studies," Tabung said.

This research also showed only an association between [inflammation](#)-associated diets and risk of [early death](#). It did not necessarily prove a cause-and-effect link.

More information: The American Cancer Society explains lifestyle choices that can [reduce cancer risk](#).

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