

High fibre diet improves lung health in smokers

December 11 2014



Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

A diet high in fibre helps reduce harmful inflammation in the lungs of smokers, according to researchers from the University of Auckland.

While quitting smoking remains the single best action smokers can take to reduce their risk of getting [lung](#) cancer or smoker's lung (also called emphysema or chronic [obstructive pulmonary disease](#)), accumulated data

suggests a diet high in fibre also confers significant benefits.

Researchers from the University of Auckland have recently published an article outlining how a high fibre diet can help reduce [lung inflammation](#)

This lung inflammation has been shown to have a critical role in causing progressive lung damage, ultimately leading to [lung diseases](#) such as emphysema and [lung cancer](#), shortening a smoker's life by up to 15-20 years.

The research paper by Associate Professor Robert Young and his group from the University's School of Medicine, was published this month in the *European Respiratory Review*, a leading lung journal.

Earlier this year an article in *Nature Medicine* reported on a study showing mice fed a high fibre diet had significantly less harmful inflammation in their lungs.

"This helps confirm our conclusions from earlier observations indicating diet has important effects on lung health," says Associate Professor Young. " This study supports the key hypothesis that the beneficial effects of a high fibre diet come largely through increased absorption of naturally-occurring anti-inflammatory chemicals (called small chain fatty acids) produced by "protective" gut bacteria. "

"These protective bacteria flourish in the gut of people consuming a high fibre diet, but diminish in those whose diets are low in fibre and high in refined foods, where "harmful" gut bacteria predominate," he says.

On the basis of this work, Dr Young and his colleagues are working with leading researchers worldwide to explore this relationship further and identify how a diet high in fibre might reduce the damaging effects of

smoking on the lungs.

"Through better engagement of [smokers](#), screening for early lung damage and lifestyle interventions such as better [diet](#) and quitting smoking, much of the burden from smoking on the healthcare system could be reduced" say Dr Young.

Provided by University of Auckland

Citation: High fibre diet improves lung health in smokers (2014, December 11) retrieved 5 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-12-high-fibre-diet-lung-health.html>

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