

# Vegetarian diet linked to lower risk of colorectal cancers

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Credit: Wikipedia.

Eating a vegetarian diet was associated with a lower risk of colorectal cancers compared with nonvegetarians in a study of Seventh-Day Adventist men and women, according to an article published online by *JAMA Internal Medicine*.

Colorectal cancer is the second leading cause of cancer death in the United States. Although great attention has been paid to screening, [primary prevention](#) through lowering risk factors remains an important objective. Dietary factors have been identified as a modifiable risk factor for colorectal cancer, including red meat which is linked to increased risk and food rich in dietary fiber which is linked to reduced risk, according to the study background.

Among 77,659 [study participants](#), Michael J. Orlich, M.D., Ph.D., of Loma Linda University, California, and coauthors identified 380 cases of [colon cancer](#) and 110 cases of rectal cancer. Compared with nonvegetarians, vegetarians had a 22 percent lower risk for all [colorectal cancers](#), 19 percent lower risk for colon cancer and 29 percent lower risk for [rectal cancer](#). Compared with nonvegetarians, vegans had a 16 percent lower risk of colorectal cancer, 18 percent less for lacto-ovo (eat milk and eggs) vegetarians, 43 percent less in pescovegetarians (eat fish) and 8 percent less in semivegetarians, according to study results.

"If such associations are causal, they may be important for primary prevention of colorectal cancers. ... The evidence that vegetarian diets similar to those of our study participants may be associated with a reduced risk of colorectal cancer, along with prior evidence of the potential reduced risk of obesity, hypertension, diabetes and mortality, should be considered carefully in making dietary choices and in giving dietary guidance," the study concludes.

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