

# Meat in moderation still okay, says dietician

October 27 2015, by Mechelle McMahon

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Sausages and other processed meats and red meats are on WHO's healthy eating hit list.

If you're scared by the [World Health Organisation's declaration](#) that processed meat - and probably red meat - are carcinogens like tobacco, just remember that old adage of everything in moderation.

"It's something we hear all the time, but it really is the key to [good health](#)," said dietitian and researcher Sarah Balaam, from QUT's Women's Wellness After Cancer Programme and study.

"The World Health Organisation's announcement is not a new debate - we have known for a long time that processed meats can be bad for your health and that [red meat](#) should be eaten in moderation.

"But the WHO research has strengthened the argument against eating a lot of these meats and it's highlighted the importance of eating a

balanced diet.

"You can still eat lean red meat, but don't have it for dinner every night and keep in mind that the recommended serving size is 65 grams."

The World Cancer Research Fund International recommends that people who eat red meat limit their consumption to less than 500 grams a week.

"Australian Dietary Guidelines say that we should eat a maximum of 455 grams of lean cooked red meat per week, so we already know we should not eat excessive amounts," Ms Balaam said.

"What is new is WHO's declaration that red meat could have a carcinogenic risk, which gives an extra reason why it would be wise to stick to the intake guidelines.

"We already know that processed meats like bacon, ham, salami and sausages are high in saturated fats and salt. It's the way they are cured - with salt and smoking - that makes them unhealthy.

"Existing research already suggests that highly charred food (eg steak cooked over flames) or smoked food are linked to increased [cancer risk](#).

"It's very hard though to prove a cancer-causing relationship with any one food item because there are so many other variables in food consumption and lifestyle habits that can have an impact on cancer.

"If people are eating a diet that's full of red meat and processed meat it could also mean they are displacing other healthier foods."

Ms Balaam said there were plenty of other alternatives for people who were concerned that reduced red meat intake would also mean reduced protein and iron.

"Eggs, nuts, seeds, beans, legumes, leafy greens and wholegrains are all great ingredients for a balanced, healthy diet," she said.

"And remember there are other lifestyle factors that also need to be taken into account for cancer risk, such as alcohol consumption, smoking and excessive body weight."

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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