

Researchers find magnesium intake may be beneficial in preventing pancreatic cancer

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Indiana University researchers have found that magnesium intake may be beneficial in preventing pancreatic cancer.

Their study, "Magnesium intake and incidence of pancreatic cancer: The VITamins and Lifestyle study," recently appeared in the *British Journal of Cancer*.

Pancreatic cancer is the fourth leading cause of cancer-related death in both men and women in the United States. The overall occurrence of pancreatic cancer has not significantly changed since 2002, but the mortality rate has increased annually from 2002 to 2011, according to the National Cancer Institute.

"Pancreatic cancer is really unique and different from other cancers," said study co-author Ka He, chair of the Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics at the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington. "The five-year survival rate is really low, so that makes prevention and identifying risk factors or predictors associated with pancreatic cancer very important."

Previous studies have found that magnesium is inversely associated with the risk of diabetes, which is a risk factor of pancreatic cancer. But few studies have explored the direct association of magnesium with pancreatic cancer; of those that did, their findings were inconclusive, said Daniel Dibaba, a Ph.D. student at the School of Public Health-Bloomington, who led the IU study.

Using information from the VITamins and Lifestyle study, Dibaba and the other co-authors analyzed an enormous trove of data on over 66,000 men and women, ages 50 to 76, looking at the direct association between magnesium and pancreatic cancer and whether age, gender, body mass index, non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs use and magnesium supplementation play a role.

Of those followed, 151 participants developed pancreatic cancer. The study found that every 100-milligrams-per-day decrease in magnesium intake was associated with a 24 percent increase in the occurrence of pancreatic cancer. The study also found that the effects of magnesium on pancreatic cancer did not appear to be modified by age, gender, [body mass index](#) or non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug use, but was limited to those taking [magnesium supplements](#) either from a multivitamin or individual supplement.

"For those at a higher risk of pancreatic cancer, adding a magnesium supplement to their diet may prove beneficial in preventing this disease," Dibaba said. "While more study is needed, the general population should strive to get the daily recommendations of [magnesium](#) through diet, such as dark, leafy greens or nuts, to prevent any risk of [pancreatic cancer](#)."

Provided by Indiana University

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