

# Vegetarian diet linked with lower risk of urinary tract infections

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A vegetarian diet may be associated with a lower risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs), a study in *Scientific Reports* suggests.

UTIs are usually caused by gut bacteria, such as *E. coli*, which enter the

[urinary tract](#) through the urethra and affect the kidneys and bladder. Previous research has shown that meat is a major reservoir for *E. coli* strains known to cause UTIs, but it is unknown whether avoiding meat reduces the risk of UTIs.

Chin-Lon Lin and colleagues assessed the incidence of UTIs in 9,724 Buddhists in Taiwan, who participated in the Tzu Chi Vegetarian Study, a study investigating the role of a [vegetarian diet](#) on [health outcomes](#) in Taiwanese Buddhists. The authors found that the overall risk of UTIs was 16% lower in vegetarians than in non-vegetarians. Of the 3,040 vegetarians in the study, 217 developed a UTI compared to 444 UTI cases in 6,684 non-vegetarians studied. The reduced UTI risk associated with a vegetarian [diet](#) was greater in men than women, although overall UTI risk for men was 79% lower than for women, regardless of diet.

The authors suggest that by not eating common sources of *E. coli*, such as poultry and pork, vegetarians may avoid ingesting *E. coli* that may cause UTIs. They also propose that the higher fibre diet of many vegetarians may prevent the growth of *E. coli* in the gut and decrease UTI risk by making the intestine more acidic.

**More information:** Yen-Chang Chen et al, The risk of urinary tract infection in vegetarians and non-vegetarians: a prospective study, *Scientific Reports* (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-020-58006-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-58006-6)

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