

The role of diet in esophageal cancer

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Cancer of the esophagus is a leading cause of cancer-related mortality worldwide. Altered dietary intakes of certain nutrients have been associated with cancer risk.

To estimate the association between dietary calcium and magnesium and

the occurrence of esophageal cancer, Shailja Shah, MD, MPH, and colleagues conducted a retrospective analysis of the [National Institutes of Health AARP Diet and Health Study](#) cohort.

This prospective cohort is the largest cohort in the United States with detailed nutrient information and linkage to [health outcomes](#), including incident cancer.

As [reported](#) in the *British Journal of Cancer*, the researchers identified 1,414 cases of incident primary esophageal cancers (squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma) among more than 536,000 respondents.

They demonstrated that increased calcium intake was associated with a lower risk of [squamous cell carcinoma](#), while increased magnesium intake was associated with a greater risk of adenocarcinoma, but only among those with a low ratio of calcium:magnesium intake.

If confirmed, particularly via interventional studies, these findings could inform dietary modifications that may help reduce the burden of one of the most common and deadly cancers globally.

More information: Shailja C. Shah et al. Associations between calcium and magnesium intake and the risk of incident oesophageal cancer: an analysis of the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study prospective cohort, *British Journal of Cancer* (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/s41416-020-0818-6](#)

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