

Increased saturated fat in diet linked to aggressive prostate cancer

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Micrograph showing prostatic acinar adenocarcinoma (the most common form of prostate cancer) Credit: Wikipedia

Eating a diet higher in saturated fat, a type of fat found commonly in foods such as fatty beef and cheese, was linked to more aggressive prostate cancer, a study by University of North Carolina Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center researchers and collaborators has found. The preliminary results were presented Monday, April 18, at the American Association for Cancer Research Annual Meeting in New Orleans.

"We show that high dietary saturated fat content is associated with increased [prostate cancer](#) aggressiveness," said Emma H. Allott, PhD, a research assistant professor in the UNC Gillings School of Global Public Health. "This may suggest that limiting dietary saturated fat content, which we know is important for overall health and cardiovascular disease prevention, may also have a role in prostate cancer."

The results were drawn from a survey of 1,854 men who were diagnosed with prostate cancer between 2004 and 2009 in North Carolina and in

Louisiana as part of a larger study called the North Carolina-Louisiana Prostate Cancer Project.

Men were asked a series of questions about their diet and other factors at the time of diagnosis with prostate cancer, and then researchers examined the association between saturated fat intake and the aggressiveness of the men's tumor at diagnosis. They adjusted dietary saturated fat for total fat intake in their statistical models in order to tease apart the effects of saturated fat from total fat intake. They gauged aggressiveness using the results of the patients' prostate cancer-specific antigen, or PSA, tests, as well as the clinical stage of their cancer and Gleason grade.

They found that higher saturated fat intake was linked to increased prostate cancer aggressiveness. Allott said that high saturated [fat content](#) in the diet contributes to raised blood cholesterol levels, and the researchers also found in the study that men taking statins, which are drugs used to control cholesterol levels, had weaker associations between [saturated fat](#) intake and prostate cancer aggressiveness. These findings may suggest that statins counteract, but do not completely reverse, the effects of high saturated [fat intake](#) on prostate cancer aggressiveness. In addition, they found that higher levels of polyunsaturated fats, which are found in foods such as fish and nuts, were linked to lower levels of prostate cancer aggressiveness.

Allott said future research goals include investigating the mechanisms behind the associations.

Provided by University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine

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