

Red meat linked to higher risk of premature death

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A new study indicates that eating unprocessed red meat (hamburger, pork, roast beef, lamb) and processed meats (bacon, hot dogs, bologna, sausage) may increase a person's risk of premature death and raise their risk of death from heart disease and cancer.

Conversely, substituting other foods such as fish, poultry, nuts and beans for red meat may lower their risk of premature death, the analysis suggests.

Other studies have linked eating red meat and processed meat to an increased risk of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, some types of cancer, particularly colorectal cancer, and premature death.

"This new study provides further compelling evidence that high amounts of red meat may boost the risk of premature death," says the study's lead author, An Pan of the Harvard School of Public Health. But, he adds, this type of study shows association, which doesn't necessarily mean causation.

Pan and colleagues analyzed the diet, health and death data on 37,698 men and 83,644 women. Participants completed questionnaires about their diets every four years. During the study follow-up period of more than two decades, almost 24,000 of the participants died, including 5,910 from heart disease and 9,464 from cancer.

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