The Wellness Scale

Living A Balanced Life

United States Coast Guard

Processed And Red Meat Could Cause Cancer? Your Questions Answered

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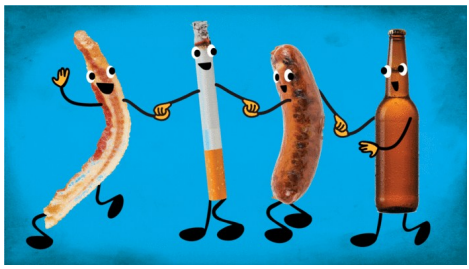


What kind of meat are we talking about here?

The IARC, WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer defines processed meat as any meat that's been "transformed through salting, curing, fermentation, smoking or other processes to enhance flavor or improve preservation." So that means not just beef or pork but also processed poultry or liver.

Red meat is beef, veal, pork, lamb, mutton and goat (and horse, if you happen to fancy it).

What about chicken or turkey sausage?

WHO's classification of all processed meat as carcinogenic means turkey and chicken sausage and bacon are included, too.

What kind of cancer?

The evidence was strongest linking red and processed meat consumption with colorectal cancer. The scientists also looked at data on more than 15 other types of cancer and saw positive associations "between consumption of red meat and cancers of the pancreas and the prostate (mainly advanced prostate cancer), and between consumption of processed meat and cancer of the stomach."

How did the IARC reach these conclusions?

By reviewing 800 studies that looked at the association of cancer with consumption of red or processed meat in people around the world, of diverse ethnicities and diets.

What exactly is it in red and processed meat that makes it carcinogenic?

Studies show that meat processing techniques and cooking it at high temperatures can lead to the formation of carcinogenic chemicals. Other studies show those compounds appearing in parts of the digestive tract like the colon.

As we've reported, one theory is that the iron in meat works as a catalyst to turn nitrates added as preservatives into a particular kind of carcinogen in the body. And there are other proposed mechanisms, too.

Are certain types of meat processing less dangerous than others?

Maybe. We can't really parse that out with the research done so far, says Dr. Steven Clinton, professor of medical oncology at Ohio State University.

So does this mean I should give up eating red and processed meat?

If you're eating a diet that is very rich in meat products and processed meats, it may be time to cut back, says Clinton, who's also a member of the 2015 Dietary Guidelines Advisory Committee, which advises the federal government on nutrition policy. This year, the panel recommended that Americans cut back on red and processed meat. (Not surprisingly, the meat industry vehemently opposed the recommendation.)

That doesn't mean bacon is permanently off limits — as Clinton told us, he ate some over the weekend.

Well, then, how much is safe to eat?

The IARC stopped short of saying what constitutes a safe amount to eat. According to Dariush Mozzafarian, dean of the School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University, there's not enough evidence to give meat eaters a specific amount that is OK to consume.

With that caveat, Mozzaffarian says his own general recommendations are "no more than one to two servings per month of processed meats, and no more than one to two servings per week of unprocessed meat."

The American Cancer Society doesn't provide specific targets. Instead, it advises that Americans minimize processed meats like bacon and sausage in their diets, and choose fish, poultry and beans as an alternative to red meat. And when you do eat red meat, the ACS says select leaner cuts and smaller portions.

As Clinton tells NPR's Robert Siegel on *All Things Considered,* ultimately, how much is OK to eat depends on a person's individual risk factors.

But isn't eating processed meat just as bad as smoking?

No. While WHO has now put processed meat in the same category of cancer risk as smoking, that doesn't mean it's equally dangerous. As a single factor, smoking contributes enormously to the risk of lung and other types of cancer, Clinton says. By contrast, processed meat "contributes a much more modest risk," he says.

Specifically, for every 1.8 ounces of processed meat eaten daily, the risk of colorectal cancer goes up about 18 percent over what it would have been if you didn't eat processed meat, according to the IARC. Those are relative risks — and the risk of developing colorectal cancer is fairly low to begin with. The quantitative risk, Clinton says, "is not even in the same ballpark as cigarette smoking."

Q: Is this really all that new?

A: No. The findings have been out there for several years.

~www.npr.org

Your Body Holds Important Clues to Your State of Health

Your body is like a billboard for your state of health. By knowing the telltale clues, you can tell much about what's going on — and whether it's time to see the doctor for further followup. Listen closely: Is your body trying to tell you something?

What Your Tongue Can Tell You

For clues about problems in your mouth, all you have to do is stick out your tongue and look in the mirror. A healthy tongue should be pink and covered with small nodules. But if you see any deviation from your tongue's normal appearance, or any pain, it may be cause for concern. These changes might need to be evaluated by a doctor or dentist. What to look for when you brush your teeth.

What Your Sweat Says

The body's natural coolant, sweat is purer than most drinking water. But sweating can be associated with disease. And when sweat meets bacteria, the result is not always gentle on the nose. Why do some varieties of sweat smell worse than others? Know which medical conditions — from menopause to hyperhidrosis — can make you sweat, and when sweat can signal a serious medical condition that needs prompt attention. Find out why sweat smells turn foul.

What the Color of Your Urine Says About You

Human urine has been a useful tool for doctors to diagnose their patients' medical problems since the earliest days of medicine. Urine's color, density, and odor can reveal much about the state of our health. Your urine's color also can be influenced by substances you ingest, such as medicine. But your urine also can contain substances, such as blood, that are not visible. Read about the clues to illness in your urine.

What Your Bladder is Trying to Tell You About Your Health

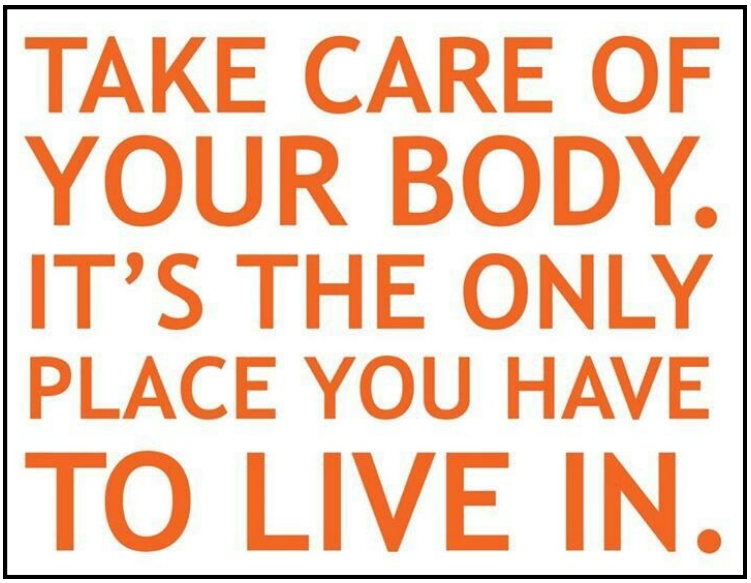
How your bladder functions every day can tell you a lot about your overall health. How often you urinate during the day and during the night, the color of your urine and whether you can "hold it" all provide clues to health conditions that don't involve your urinary system. So what should you look out for? Any problem that is a departure from your usual habits. Find out the three major trouble signs.

Your Feet Hold Clues to Clogged Arteries

Did you know your doctor can check for signs of peripheral artery disease (PAD) with a simple test of the pulses in your feet? PAD and coronary artery disease (CAD) are associated with atherosclerosis – a buildup of cholesterol in the body's arteries. Sometimes the presence of PAD might mean an increased risk for heart disease, so screening with this easy, non-invasive test could help save your life. Find out why this simple test is so important.

6 Things Your Nails Can Say

If you want some clues about your overall health, look down at your fingernails. Many things can occur in the nails that can signify systemic or skin problems. So be on the lookout for anything on or around your fingernails or toenails that suddenly appears different. Anything that doesn't look normal ought to be addressed by your physician. You can take care of your nails by staying hydrated and eating a well-balanced diet. Learn about six conditions that can also cause symptoms in your nails.



How Your Fingers Can Predict Your Risk of Prostate Cancer

It sounds like an urban legend: The length of a man's ring finger may indicate his lifetime risk of prostate cancer. The idea started with years of simple observation, but it has picked up credibility in the past few years as researchers backed it with data. It is worth paying attention to this clue, especially if you have other risk factors. And know that much research remains to be done. Find out what the research says.

Your Eyes: A Window to Your Health

The old saying goes that the eyes are the windows to the soul, but they can also be a window into your health. Ophthalmologists often see clues in the eyes that warn of health issues elsewhere in your body. Eye exams are important not only for the health of the eye, but also to determine if there are systemic issues that need attention. Find out the health warning signs ophthalmologists can find in your eyes

~www.clevelandclinic.org

Marathon recovery

You've just finished a marathon; you've put your body through hell, but it's not over yet. Recovering can be just important as the time you put in training for race day. Taking the right recovery measures can help you avoid lingering soreness and injury and help you get back on the road sooner.

- **Food.** After an intense workout such as a marathon, it's important to **refuel** with carbs and protein. Think whole grains, fruits, vegetables, lean meats, dairy products, and legumes. You've probably been thinking about your **post-race meal** for some time. But before you binge, plan ahead.

- **Hydrate.** Drink lots of fluids and eat juicy fruits and vegetables to replace the fluids lost during the race. See HPRC's **Hydration Infosheet** for hydration guidelines during and after exercise.

- **Massage/Foam roll**. Massage by a professional or self-massage (such as **foam rolling**), increases blood flow and help heal damaged muscles. Foam rolling also helps stretch out tight muscles and decrease soreness.

- **Exercise.** Light exercise (not running) within a day or two after a race can help you recover by increasing blood flow, which brings nutrients into and flushes toxins out of your muscles. Keep it light; go for an easy bike ride, hit the pool, or even go for a light walk.

- **Sleep.** **Sleep** is critical to recovery, not only after a race but for general health and optimal functioning. Sleep is the time when your body restores and repairs, which is especially important after the stress you've put it through. Take that extra nap; you deserve it!

- **Ice bath.** While this method of recovery hasn't actually been proven to be effective, sitting in a tub of ice water after a race or hard workout is still a popular method. People report that this makes them feel better, and mental recovery is very important.

~www.hprc-online.org

Why Weight Is So Hard to Keep Off

Many of the factors that contribute to weight gain make it hard to succeed at losing weight *and* keeping it off. Actually, it's not hard to lose weight initially—follow any crash diet for a week or two and you'll lose some weight, mostly due to water loss. But it's very hard to keep the lost weight off over time. That's why 80 to 95 percent of dieters regain their lost weight. The key is to make improvements in eating and physical activity a permanent part of your life. Unfortunately, many dieters experience "behavioral fatigue," whereby they grow weary of dietary and exercise changes that cease to yield benefits after the first six to nine months and thus revert to old eating patterns.

Making matters more difficult is the fact that the body (via a "feedback loop" between the brain and various bodily systems) tends to defend itself against the loss of body fat—an evolutionary trait that helped early humans survive when food was scarce. This triggers a host of metabolic changes through which the body compensates by reducing its metabolic rate and conserving energy (that is, burning less fat and fewer calories) and increasing hunger (usually for fattening foods). These adaptations occur most strongly in people who have been obese for some time and in those genetically programmed to have a "thrifty" metabolism, and they stack the deck against maintaining weight loss, especially in an environment that encourages overeating. For many people, one way to help counter such biological factors that limit weight loss and promote regain is to increase exercise.

Here's one way it works. A very rough "rule" is that you need a 3,500-calorie deficit (by eating less, exercising more, or both) to lose a pound of body weight. But it's not just a matter of simple arithmetic. The body will adapt to the calorie deficit and weight loss, notably by lowering its metabolic rate and favoring less-energetic behavior—making it harder to continue losing weight or even maintain a lower weight. In that case, it would take more than a 3,500-calorie deficit (from your pre-diet calorie intake) to lose another pound, since your body is running on fewer calories. And since your smaller body burns fewer calories, you'll always need to consume fewer calories than you did at your heavier weight in order to maintain the weight loss. All this increases the likelihood of weight regain.

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