

More red meat consumption appears to be associated with increased risk of death

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Eating more red meat appears to be associated with an increased risk of all-cause mortality and death from cardiovascular disease and cancer, but substituting other foods including fish and poultry for red meat is associated with a lower mortality risk, according to a study published Online First by *Archives of Internal Medicine*.

Meat is a major source of protein and fat in many diets and previous studies suggest that eating meat is associated with increased risk for diabetes, [cardiovascular disease](#) (CVD) and certain cancers, the authors write in their study background.

An Pan, Ph.D., of the Harvard School of Public Health, Boston, and colleagues analyzed data from two prospective cohort studies with repeated measures of diet and up to 28 years of follow-up. Data from 37,698 men and 83,644 women were used. Researchers documented 23,926 deaths, including 5,910 from CVD and 9,464 from cancer.

"We found that a higher intake of red meat was associated with a significantly elevated risk of total, CVD and [cancer mortality](#), and this association was observed for unprocessed and processed red meat, with a relatively greater risk for processed red meat," the authors comment. "Substitution of fish, poultry, nuts, legumes, low-fat dairy products and whole grains for red meat was associated with a significantly lower risk of mortality."

The elevated risk of total mortality in the pooled analysis for a one-serving-per-day increase was 12 percent for total red meat, 13 percent for unprocessed red meat and 20 percent for processed red meat, the results indicate.

In their substitution analyses, the authors estimated that replacing one serving of total red meat with one serving of fish, poultry, nuts, legumes, low-fat dairy products or whole grains daily was associated with a lower risk of total mortality: 7 percent for fish, 14 percent for poultry,

19 percent for nuts, 10 percent for legumes, 10 percent for low-fat [dairy products](#) and 14 percent for [whole grains](#).

"We estimated that 9.3 percent in men and 7.6 percent in women of total deaths during follow-up could be prevented if all the participants consumed fewer than 0.5 servings per day of total red meat in these cohorts," they comment.

In an invited commentary, Dean Ornish, M.D., of the University of California, San Francisco, writes: "In addition to their health benefits, the food choices we make each day affect other important areas as well. What is personally sustainable is globally sustainable. What is good for you is good for our planet."

"More than 75 percent of the \$2.6 trillion in annual U.S. health care costs are from chronic disease. Eating less [red meat](#) is likely to reduce morbidity from these illnesses, thereby reducing health care costs," he comments.

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