

PROCESSED MEAT AND BOWEL CANCER RISK

Red and processed meat have been in the media spotlight recently following World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) UK's advice to parents to avoid giving children ham in packed lunches.

According to WCRF, there is strong evidence to show that eating no more than 500g of red meat and cutting out processed meat can reduce our risk of [bowel cancer](#) (also known as colorectal cancer), the third most common cancer in the UK.

Why do red and processed meat increase cancer risk?

- They contain a red-coloured compound called haem, which has been shown to damage the lining of the colon.
- Red meat can also stimulate production in the gut of cancer-causing substances called N-nitroso compounds, which can damage DNA in cells.
- Processed meat may produce higher levels of N-nitroso compounds than fresh red meat. This may be why the evidence linking it to cancer risk is stronger.

Processed meat

The [scientific evidence](#) linking processed meat and bowel cancer shows that the best amount to eat is none at all.

What is processed meat?

In relation to the cancer risk, the term 'processed meat' refers to meat preserved by smoking, curing or salting, or by the addition of preservatives. These include:

ham	bacon	pastrami
salami	hot dogs	some sausages

Red meat

Research shows that people who consume more red and processed meat tend to have higher rates of bowel cancer.

The findings strongly suggest that consuming more than about 500g (cooked weight) of red meat a week raises the risk of the disease.

Red meat in moderation

For those of us who enjoy red meat, it's good to know that it can still form part of a balanced diet. We can choose smaller, leaner portions of red meat, and keep some days of the week red-meat free. In meat-based dishes such as casseroles or stews, we can replace some of the meat with lentils or beans.

Fish and lean poultry, such as chicken and turkey, were not found to increase our cancer risk. These are good alternatives in recipes that use red meat.

For further info and source, please visit: www.wcrf-uk.org

Women's health

Endometriosis Awareness week is in March 2010. This is a common condition affecting around 2 million women in the UK, most of whom will be diagnosed between the ages of 25 - 40.

Cells that usually line the womb are found elsewhere in the body, they behave in the same way which means that every month they grow during the menstrual cycle and then shed blood but unlike the lining of the womb these cells have no way of leaving the body. The endometrial tissue is trapped resulting in the following symptoms:-

- Painful heavy periods
- Pelvic pain
- Pain during sexual intercourse
- Bleeding in between periods
- Subfertility or infertility
- Low backache.

The role of the Occupational Health Adviser is important in managing these chronic conditions and may include:-

1. Sickness absence management which may be frequent and of a short-term nature.
2. Helping the employee to understand the nature of the condition and how to take responsibility for their general health.
3. Giving Managers information about the condition (with the employees permission).
4. Advising on return to work if surgery is necessary.
5. Liaising with the G.P. and or Specialist in order to gain further information if this is deemed necessary.
6. Referral to counselling services if requested.
7. Advising on appropriate alternative therapies.

As with other chronic conditions the OHA role is very important both in supporting the employee and keeping the managers and Human Resources informed.

HSE Risk assessment template for SMEs

The Health and Safety Executive has developed a Risk Assessment and Policy template for duty holders in lower risk, small to medium enterprises (SMEs). It has been designed to encourage smaller employers to carry out more risk assessments.

What is a Risk Assessment? A risk assessment is simply a careful examination of what, in your work, could cause harm to people, so that you can weigh up whether you have taken enough precautions or should do more to prevent harm.

To obtain a copy, go to <http://www.hse.gov.uk/business/risk.htm>

