**Oily fish cuts bowel cancer deaths: study**

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Bowel cancer patients who eat a lot of oily fish may cut their chances of dying from the disease, research suggests.

Those with a lot of omega-3 in their diets from oily fish might live longer, the new study published online in the journal Gut found.

Experts from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston said that if the findings could be reproduced in other studies, patients with bowel cancer might benefit from boosting their oily fish intake.

Previous research has suggested that omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids (PUFAs)-namely, eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), and docosapentaenoic acid (DPA) – can suppress the growth of cancer tumours and curb blood supply to cancer cells.

In the new study, experts analysed data for 1659 people who had bowel cancer. Of these, 561 had died during the 10-year follow-up, with 169 of those deaths specifically attributable to their cancer.

Their intake of omega-3 – both from natural sources and supplements – was also analysed.

The results showed that those who consumed PUFAs of at least 0.3g per day from foods had 41 per cent less chance of death from bowel cancer compared with those who consumed less than 0.10g per day.

A similar result was found for those taking fish oil supplements, although data was limited for this group.

Patients who increased their PUFA intake by at least 0.15g per day after being diagnosed with cancer had a 70 per cent reduced chance of dying from bowel cancer compared with those who did not change their intake.

Meanwhile, a reduction in daily intake of omega-3 was associated with a 10 per cent increased risk of death from the disease.

Omega-3 intake, however, was not linked to a lower risk of death overall from any cause.

The authors concluded: "If replicated by other studies, our results support the clinical recommendation of increasing marine omega-3 PUFAs among patients with bowel cancer."

Gail Curry, head of health promotion and training at Bowel Cancer UK, said: "The results of this study are interesting but more evidence is needed on what people can do to improve their chances of survival of bowel cancer.

"It is the fourth most common cancer in the UK and every 15 minutes in the UK someone is diagnosed with bowel cancer."

Martin Ledwick, Cancer Research UK’s head information nurse, said: "These results give scientists an exciting line of enquiry for future research.

"The study only found a link between eating more Omega 3 fatty acids and a lower risk of dying from bowel cancer so it’s not yet clear whether increasing Omega 3 in patients’ diet was directly causing this lower risk.

"If the results can be replicated in more trials, this could lead to relatively easy dietary changes that could help bowel cancer patients lower the risk of their cancer coming back."