**A few mouthfuls of oily fish once a week 'can reduce the risk of dying from bowel cancer by 70%'**

* **Major US study analysed health records of 170,000 people over a decade**
* **A total of 1659 developed bowel cancer, with 169 dying from cancer**
* **Harvard study found salmon, sardines and trout are beneficial to health**
* **The diet can reduce the risk of bowel cancer by 70 per cent**

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Eating oily fish once a week may help bowel cancer patients significantly boost their chance of survival, research suggests.

The omega-3 fatty acids in sardines, salmon and trout are thought to suppress tumour growth and curb blood supply to cancer cells.

A major study by US experts has now found that regularly eating small amounts of these beneficial fish after a diagnosis of bowel cancer can reduce the risk of dying from the disease by up to 70 per cent.

More than 41,000 are diagnosed with bowel cancer in Britain every year, making it the country’s fourth most common cancer. Each year 16,000 die from the disease.

The scientists, from Harvard Medical School and Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, said their findings need to be reproduced in further studies – but if the results are replicated, patients with bowel cancer might benefit from boosting their oily fish intake.

They analysed the health records of 170,000 Americans monitored for at least a decade, 1,659 of whom developed bowel cancer.

Of those, 561 had died during the study period, with 169 of those deaths specifically attributable to their cancer.

The results showed that those who ate food containing at least 0.3g of omega-3 fatty acids each day had a 41 per cent lower risk of death from bowel cancer than those who consumed less than 0.1g per day. A similar result was found for those taking fish oil supplements, although data was limited for this group.

And the researchers found that those who increased their 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.

A 0.15g reduction in daily intake of omega-3, meanwhile, was linked to a 10 per cent increased risk of death from the disease.

The authors, whose work is published in the BMJ Gut journal, wrote: ‘If replicated by other studies, our results support the recommendation of increasing marine omega-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids among patients with bowel cancer.’

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About 15g of salmon – a few mouthfuls – contains 0.3g of omega-3 fatty acids. Eating a 100g fillet – a portion that might be served as a meal – once a week would be enough to provide the equivalent of this amount daily.

Around 100g of herring, 200g of sardines, or 200g of trout, eaten weekly, would also deliver the equivalent of 0.3g a day of omega-3.

Last night British experts gave the findings a cautious welcome. Martin Ledwick, Cancer Research UK’s head information nurse, said: ‘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.’

Professor Tom Sanders, a nutritionist at King’s College London, said people who eat more fish are less likely to eat as much red meat, which is known to increase bowel cancer risk.

‘This study… does support the notion that eating oily fish once or twice a week is good for health especially if it replaces red and processed meat,’ he added.

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3698188/A-mouthfuls-oily-fish-day-reduce-risk-dying-bowel-cancer-70.html#ixzz4KQwbpFU4>   
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