# Diverticulitis symptoms? Red meat diet can cause condition often mistaken for bowel cancer

### DIVERTICULITIS, an inflammatory bowel condition, could be caused by eating too much red meat - including sausages, burgers and steaks.

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Diverticulitis occurs when the small pockets or bulges lining the intestine become inflamed, causing severe abdominal pain, a high temperature, diarrhoea and frequent bowel movements - symptoms similar to [irritable bowel syndrome](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/743405/irritable-bowel-syndrome-IBS-symptoms-stress?????). The disease can sometimes even be mistaken for symptoms of bowel cancer.

Experts have warned cases of diverticulitis are on the rise, particularly among young people - which could be caused by increased consumption of red meat.

Around 4 per cent of those affected will develop severe or long term complications, such as perforations in the gut wall and abscesses on the intestines.

It is not known what causes diverticulitis although it has been linked to smoking, the use of anti-inflammatory drugs, physical inactivity and obesity, experts argue.

Researchers, writing in the journal Gut, analysed the impact of red meat, poulty and fish on the risk of developing diverticulitis in nearly 46,500 men.

The men were all aged 40 to 75 when they joined the study between 1986 and 2012.

Every four years they were asked to state how often, on average, they had eaten standard size portions of red meat, poultry, and fish.

They were given nine options, ranging from never, less than once a month, or six or more times a day to record their dietary intake.

During the 26 year monitoring period, some 764 men developed diverticulitis.

Those who ate higher quantities of red meat tended to use common anti-inflammatory drugs and painkillers more often; they smoked more; and they were less likely to exercise vigorously. Their fibre intake was also lower.

Men who ate more poultry and fish were more likely to exercise vigorously, take aspirin, and to smoke less.

Experts found total red meat intake was associated with an increased diverticulitis risk.

Compared with the lowest levels of consumption, the highest level of red meat intake was associated with a 58 per cent heightened risk of developing diverticulitis, with each daily serving associated with an 18 per cent increased risk.

“Our findings may provide practical dietary guidance for patients at risk of diverticulitis, a common disease of huge economic and clinical burden,” said the authors of the study.

They explained higher red meat consumption has been linked to the presence of inflammatory chemicals as well as heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Diverticulitis could also be triggered by the type of bacteria colonising the gut.