**Anxiety and depression 'can increase your cancer risk by a third': Emotional distress thought to damage body's defence systems against the disease**

* **Up to one in 10 people in the UK will at some point battle anxiety or depression,**
* **Study shows it raises risk of death from bowel, prostate and pancreatic cancer**
* **Experts say this may be because depression makes sufferers more likely to smoke and drink, and less likely to take exercise**

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* [e-mail](mailto:?subject=Read%20this:%20Anxiety%20and%20depression%20%27can%20increase%20your%20cancer%20risk%20by%20a%20third%27:%20Emotional%20distress%20thought%20to%20damage%20body%27s%20defence%20systems%20against%20the%20disease%C2%A0&body=Anxiety%20and%20depression%20%27can%20increase%20your%20cancer%20risk%20by%20a%20third%27%3A%20Emotional%20distress%20thought%20to%20damage%20body%27s%20defence%20systems%20against%20the%20disease%C2%A0%0A%0AUp%20to%20one%20in%2010%20people%20in%20the%20UK%20will%20at%20some%20point%20battle%20anxiety%20or%20depression%2C%20which%20research%20for%20the%20first%20time%20shows%20raises%20the%20danger%20of%20death%20from%20bowel%2C%20prostate%20and%20pancreatic%20cancer.%0A%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4158390%2FDepression-increase-cancer-risk-third.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top%0A%0A%0AMost%20Read%20Articles%3A%0A%0AMum%20has%20two%20sets%20of%20twins%20despite%20using%20CONTRACEPTION%3A%20Emma%20had%20first%20surprise%20pregnancy%20while%20on%20the%20pill%2C%20then%20switched%20to%20an%20implant...%20only%20to%20conceive%20again%20and%20beat%20three-billion-to-one%20odds%C2%A0%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4262100%2FMother-two-sets-twins-birth-control.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top_most-read-articles%0A%0AMadeleine%20McCann%27s%20father%20warns%20thousands%20of%20heart%20patients%20are%20undergoing%20needless%20surgery%2C%20which%20is%20costing%20the%20NHS%20%C2%A360m%20a%20year%2C%20due%20to%20an%20inaccurate%20test%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4263480%2FInaccurate-heart-test-costing-NHS-says-Gerry-McCann.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top_most-read-articles%0A%0AA%20yawning%20gap%21%20Mums%20lose%20more%20sleep%20than%20dads%3A%20Chance%20of%20regularly%20not%20getting%20enough%20shuteye%20goes%20up%20by%2050%25%20for%20every%20child%20a%20woman%20has%0Ahttp%3A%2F%2Fwww.dailymail.co.uk%2Fhealth%2Farticle-4262502%2FA-yawning-gap-Mums-lose-sleep-dads.html%3Fito%3Demail_share_article-top_most-read-articles%0A%0A)

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Emotional distress can raise your risk of dying of cancer by a third, a study has found.

Up to one in 10 people in the UK will at some point battle anxiety or depression, which research for the first time shows raises the danger of death from bowel, prostate and pancreatic cancer.

Researchers say this may be because depression makes sufferers more likely to smoke and drink, and less likely to take exercise.

But even accounting for this, anxious and depressed people die in greater numbers from cancer – thought to show that their unhappiness damages the body’s defence systems against the disease.

The authors of the study, from University College London, Edinburgh University, and University of Sydney in Australia, suggest emotional distress may hit immune function and damage DNA repair.

It can also stop people from attending screening, which could spot their cancers early, or prevent them seeking proper treatment when they do fall ill.

In a review of 16 studies, taking in more than 163,000 people in the UK, they found those with anxiety and depression had a 32 per cent greater risk of dying from all types of cancer. This was true despite age, sex, education, weight, status and regardless of whether people smoked and drank.

Lead author Dr David Batty, from University College London, said: ‘After statistical control for these factors, the results show that compared with people in the least distressed group, death rates in the most distressed group were consistently higher for cancer of the bowel, prostate, pancreas, and oesophagus and for leukaemia.’

The people studied were followed for almost a decade on average, given questionnaires to judge if they were anxious or depressed. Their mental wellbeing was for some cancers as important as obesity or smoking in raising their danger of dying from the disease.

The way in which people who are anxious stop looking after themselves could explain their higher danger of death from bowel, pancreatic and gullet cancers.

These are all lifestyle-related cancers which can be made worse by distressed people overeating or failing to exercise.

Prostate cancer, another cancer with higher death rates among those with emotional distress, is a hormone-related cancer. This may be caused by depression symptoms which cause spikes in the stress hormone cortisol, restrain DNA repair and harm the immune response which can ward off cancer.

These physical effects could raise the risk of all types of cancer, by striking at the body’s natural defences.

The knock-on effects of psychological problems on the body have been highlighted by previous research showing that people with neurotic or conscientious personality types may be more likely to fall ill. Anxiety and depression have already been linked with an increased risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.

The latest study, published in the British Medical Journal, looked at 163,363 people free from cancer, but the authors say some of these may have unknowingly been in the early stages of the disease, suffering symptoms which may have affected their mood and skewed the results.

However, the authors corrected for this by excluding those who died in the first five years of follow-up, with the results that emotionally distressed people died more often from cancer remaining the same.

Dr Batty said: ‘Our findings contribute to the evidence that poor mental health might have some predictive capacity for certain physical diseases but we are a long way off from knowing if these relationships are truly causal.’

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