**Anxiety and depression 'could increase risk of cancer death'**

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**Anxiety and depression could increase the risk of dying from cancer, research suggests.**

Experts analysed data from 163,363 men and women who were free from cancer at the start of the study, of whom 4,353 went on to die from the disease.

The findings, [published by the British Medical](http://www.bmj.com/content/356/bmj.j108) Journal, showed that people categorised as the most distressed – such as suffering from anxiety or [depression](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/mental-health) – were a third more likely to die from a range of cancers than those who were least distressed.

The [cancer](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/cancer) types included bowel, prostate and pancreatic cancer.

Spanning nine and a half years, a team of researchers from University College London, the University of Edinburgh, and the University of Sydney, followed the group and examined 16 studies - 13 from England and three from Scotland - where psychological distress was measured using health questionnaires.

Factors that may influence the results, such as age, [education](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/education) and socio-economic situation, were taken into account.

Lead author from University College London, Dr David Batty, 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 researchers said the study did not prove distress definitely caused increased death, and it may be that undiagnosed cancer lowers people’s mood.

But further analysis of a sub-group of patients suggested a link between distress and cancer death remained despite this being taken into account.

With [1 in 4 people in the UK](http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/statistics-and-facts-about-mental-health/how-common-are-mental-health-problems/) experiencing a mental [health](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/health) problem at some point in their lives, the findings adds to growing evidence that psychological distress is related to increased rates of cardiovascular disease.

Dr Batty added: “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.”

Stephen Buckley, Head of Information at Mind, said: "Anxiety and depression are significant health problems regardless of links to other illnesses.

"Though we welcome this new piece of research which can help us to better understand the links between mental and physical health."

* More about:
* [Cancer](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/cancer)
* [Mental Health](http://www.standard.co.uk/topic/mental-health)