Antibiotics could give YOU bowel cancer: Taking pills 'increases risk' of DEADLY disease

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BOWEL CANCER risk has been linked to people in their early to mid life who have taken antibiotics a long period, experts have revealed.

Experts have found the pills are linked to a heightened risk of abnormal growths in the colon and rectum - known as polyps or [colorectal tumours](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/777494/bowel-cancer-symptoms-five-signs) - adenomas - which precede the development of most cases of [bowel cancer.](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/768961/bowel-cancer-symptoms-disease-map-UK)

The findings add to evidence that the type and diversity of bacteria in the gut, referred to as the ‘microbiome,’ may have a key role in the development of cancer.

In the study, data from 16,642 women who were aged 60 and older in 2004, able to provide a history of antibiotic use between the ages of 20 and 59, and who had had at least one bowel investigation between 2004 and 2010, was analysed.

During this period, 1195 adenomas were newly diagnosed in this group.

Recent use of antibiotics within the past four years wasn’t associated with a heightened risk of an adenoma diagnosis, but long term use in the past was.

Compared with those who hadn’t taken antibiotics for any extended period in their 20s and 30s, those who had taken them for two months or more were 36 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with an adenoma.

Experts revealed women who had taken antibiotics for two months or more during their 40s and 50s were 69 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with an adenoma than those who hadn’t taken these drugs for any extended period.

Again, the scientists found the association between the tumours and antibiotics was positive.

Compared with women who had not been on antibiotics for any length of time from their 20s to their 50s, those who had taken these drugs for more than 15 days between the ages of 20 and 39, and between the ages of 40 and 59, were 73 per cent more likely to be diagnosed with an adenoma.

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Antibiotics fundamentally alter the gut microbiome, by curbing the diversity and number of bacteria, and reducing resistance to ‘hostile’ bugs.

Previous research points to depletion of certain types of bacteria and an abundance of others in patients with bowel cancer.

This might all have a crucial role the development of bowel cancer, added to which the bugs that require antibiotics may induce inflammation, which is a known risk for the development of bowel cancer.

“The findings, if confirmed by other studies, suggest the potential need to limit the use of antibiotics and sources of inflammation that may drive tumour formation,” conclude the researchers.

“There is increasing evidence that our microbiota are important in regulating our immune responses and many aspects of our normal functions, including digesting food and producing essential metabolites and vitamins,” said Dr Sheena Cruickshank, British Society for Immunology spokesperson, and Senior Lecturer in Immunology, University of Manchester.

“Thus, anything that disturbs our gut bacteria, such as changes in diet, inflammation or antibiotic use, may have an impact on our health.

“This study’s findings imply that any risk is very slight and also quite variable.

“Whilst the data adds to our growing knowledge of the importance of the gut bacteria to our health, I would be concerned about advising people to avoid using antibiotics.

“Antibiotics are crucial medicines for treating bacterial infections and, if prescribed and used appropriately, can be life-saving.”

The research was published in the journal Gut.

This comes after it was revealed doing this could[reduce risk of deadly cancer](http://www.express.co.uk/life-style/health/787242/bowel-cancer-symptoms-risk-factor-weight)by nearly a half.