

IARC Monographs evaluate consumption of red meat and processed meat

Lyon, France, 26 October 2015 – The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the cancer agency of the World Health Organization, has evaluated the carcinogenicity of the consumption of red meat and processed meat.

**RED MEAT**

**PROCESSED MEAT**

**MEAT CONSUMPTION**  
and its effects

**PUBLIC HEALTH**

## RED MEAT

After thoroughly reviewing the accumulated scientific literature, a Working Group of 22 experts from 10 countries convened by the IARC Monographs Programme **classified the consumption of red meat as probably carcinogenic to humans** (Group 2A), based on limited evidence that the **consumption of red meat causes cancer in humans and strong mechanistic evidence supporting a carcinogenic effect.**

This association was observed mainly for colorectal cancer, but associations were also seen for pancreatic cancer and prostate cancer.

## PROCESSED MEAT

Processed meat was classified as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), based on sufficient evidence in humans that the consumption of processed meat causes colorectal cancer.

home

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health/cancer/processed-meat-  
causes-cancer-red-meat-prob-  
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[http://www.bbc.com/news/  
health-21682779](http://www.bbc.com/news/health-21682779)



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## Red meat

After thorough review of the accumulated scientific literature, a Working Group of experts from 10 countries convened in the IARC Monographs Programme to evaluate the consumption of red meat and processed meat in humans (Group 1). Sufficient evidence exists that the consumption of red meat causes colorectal cancer in humans and that consumption of processed meat supports a causal role in colorectal cancer. This association was observed mainly for colorectal cancer, but associations were also seen for pancreatic cancer and prostate cancer.

## Processed meat

Processed meat was classified as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1), based on sufficient evidence in humans that the consumption of processed meat causes colorectal cancer.

## Meat consumption and its effects

The consumption of meat varies greatly between countries, with from a few percent up to 100% of people eating red meat, depending on the country, and somewhat lower proportions eating processed meat.

The experts concluded that each 50 gram portion of processed meat eaten daily increases the risk of colorectal cancer by 18%. “For an individual, the risk of developing colorectal cancer because of their consumption of processed meat remains small, but this risk increases with the amount of meat consumed,” says Dr Kurt Straif, Head of the IARC Monographs Programme. “In view of the large number of people who consume processed meat, the global impact on cancer incidence is of public health importance.”

The IARC Working Group considered more than 800 studies that investigated associations of more than a dozen types of cancer with the consumption of red meat or processed meat in many countries and populations with diverse diets. The most influential evidence came from large prospective cohort studies conducted over the past 20 years.

## Public health

“These findings further support current public health recommendations to limit intake of meat,” says Dr Christopher Wild, Director of IARC. “At the same time, red meat has nutritional value. Therefore, these results are important in enabling governments and international regulatory agencies to conduct risk assessments, in order to balance the risks and benefits of eating red meat and processed meat and to provide the best possible dietary recommendations.”



CONSUMPTION OF RED MEAT CAUSES  
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RISK INCREASES WITH THE AMOUNT OF MEAT CONSUMED

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