

Bacon booty cancer risk

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PROCESSED meats, including ham and bacon are such a high risk factor for bowel cancer they should be avoided completely, according to a report.

The study, by The World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF), is based on an in-depth analysis of 7,000 cancer studies from around the world dating back to the 1960s.

Processed meat was defined as meat preserved by smoking, curing, salting or the addition of preservatives.

Examples included ham, bacon, pastrami, salami, and frankfurters. However, not all minced meats and hamburgers were considered “processed”.

The panel recommended that people consume less than 500 grams, or 18 ounces, of cooked red meat per week, and avoid processed meat altogether if possible.

According to the report, body fat and obesity are far more closely linked to cancer than is generally realised.

Researchers say there is “convincing” evidence that excess body fat can cause six different types of common cancers, including those affecting the breast, bowel and pancreas.

A specific strong link is said to exist between fat around the abdomen and bowel cancer.

To guard against cancer, everyone should be at the lower end of the healthy weight range, the scientists warn.

But population trends are moving in the opposite direction.

The most recent data show that in 2004 nearly a quarter of men and women in England were obese, as well as 10% per cent of girls and 8 per cent of boys under the age of 20.

According to a report from the Government’s Foresight think-tank earlier this month, 60 per cent of men, 50 per cent of women and a quarter of all children in the UK could be clinically obese by 2050.

Elsewhere the report had mixed messages about milk and dairy products. Milk was thought to protect against bowel cancer, and possibly bladder cancer.

High-calcium diets - which tend to include dairy products - were said to be a probable cause of prostate cancer. There was limited evidence suggesting that high consumption of milk and dairy foods can trigger this disease.

Mothers' milk, in contrast, was convincingly found to protect women against breast cancer.

It also "probably" protected the breast-fed child against obesity later in life, and thereby cancer. Mothers were advised to breastfeed exclusively for six months and to continue with complementary breastfeeding after that time.

Alcoholic drinks were strongly linked to mouth, oesophagus and breast cancers. Children and pregnant women were urged not to consume alcoholic drinks of any kind.

But the panel said although there were no "safe" alcohol limits for cancer, this had to be balanced against the protective effect modest alcohol consumption was said to have against heart disease.