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No amount of bacon, alcohol is safe, World Cancer Research Fund finds

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(Meredith) — Want to reduce your risk of cancer by 40 percent? Stop eating bacon (and all processed meat) and drinking alcohol, according to a new set of health guidelines.

The new guidelines from the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) are part of a ten-point plan to help you reduce your risk of cancer. The guidelines are based on a study of more than 50 million people, which the WCRF says is the largest cancer study ever conducted.

Of those 50 million people, 3.5 million were eventually diagnosed with cancer. The research found that there is strong evidence that the consumption of red meat and processed meat are both causes of colorectal cancer.

Because of this, the WCRF urges people to limit their intake of red meat (all types of mammal meat, such as beef, veal, pork, lamb, deer and goat) and to eat little to no processed meat (including ham, bacon, salami and sausage).

If you eat red meat, the WCRF says to limit consumption to no more than three servings per week (12 to 18 oz total for three portions).

"It is not necessary to consume red meat in order to maintain adequate nutritional status... eating meat is not an essential part of a healthy diet," the study reads.

The study, however, is even stricter on the consumption of processed meat.

"The evidence on processed meat is even more clear-cut," the guidelines read. "The data show that no level of intake can confidently be associated with a lack of risk." Meaning, your risk of cancer is increased by eating even the smallest amounts of processed meat.

Alcohol is also on the do-not-consume list. It is linked to cancers of the mouth, pharynx, larynx, oesophagus, liver, colorectum and breast.

"There is strong evidence that drinking alcohol is a cause of many cancers," the study's overview reads. "Even small amounts of alcoholic drinks can increase the risk of several cancers."

Like processed meat, the WCRF says there is no amount of alcohol, even the smallest amount, that does not increase your risk of some cancers.

The ten-point guidelines also emphasize the link of obesity to certain cancers. Many of the remaining points in the plan highlight the need to ensure you are not obese, thus preventing some cancers. However, as stated above, red meat, processed meat and alcohol were directly linked to cancer itself, not just to obesity.

The full ten-point plan to reduce your risk of cancer includes:

- Be a healthy weight
- Be physically active
- Eat a diet rich in whole grains, vegetables, fruit and beans
- Limit consumption of "fast foods" and other processed foods high in fat, starches or sugar
- Limit consumption of red and processed meat
- Limit consumption of sugar-sweetened drinks
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Do not use supplements for cancer prevention
- For mothers: breastfeed your baby, if you can
- After being diagnosed with cancer: continue to follow the above recommendations

Read the full report from the WCRF here.

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