

What to eat to beat prostate cancer: Eating vegetables like broccoli, kale and cabbage can cut spread of disease by more than half

By **Dr Michael Greger** For **The Daily Mail**, www.dailymail.co.uk
March 2nd, 2016

More than 330,000 British men are living with prostate cancer — which is a whole lot better than dying from it. If the cancer is caught while still localised within the prostate, the chances of it killing you within the following five years are practically nil. However, if the cancer spreads, your chances of surviving five years may be as low as one in three. For this reason, scientists have been desperate to identify factors that help cause prostate cancer to spread.



Eating a varied plant-based diet
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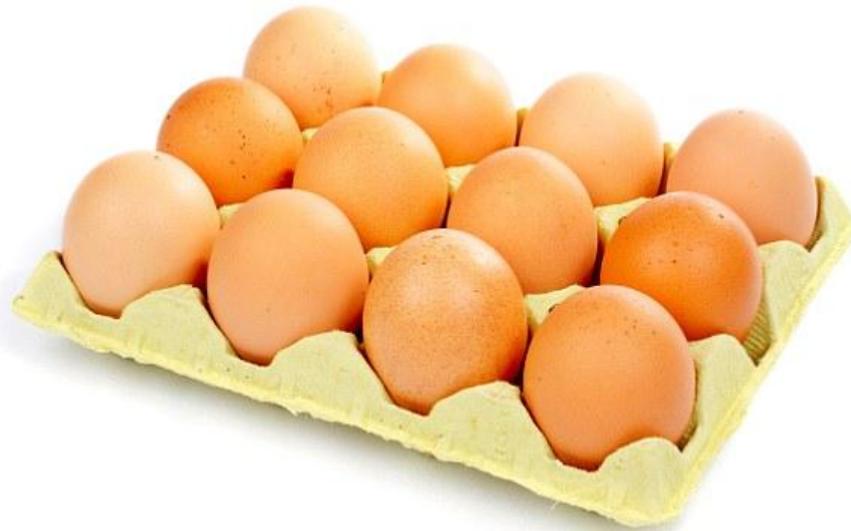
EGGS AND POULTRY

Harvard University researchers recruited more than 1,000 men with early-stage prostate cancer and followed them for several years.

The results were astonishing. Compared with men who rarely ate eggs, men who ate even a small part of an egg a day appeared to have twice the risk of their prostate cancer spreading — for instance, into the bones.

The only thing potentially worse than eggs was poultry.

Another trial found that men with more aggressive cancer who regularly ate chicken and turkey had up to four times the risk of prostate cancer progression. Scientists suggest that the link between consuming poultry and cancer spread may be due to carcinogens in cooked meat. For unknown reasons, these carcinogens build up more in the muscles of chickens and turkeys than in those of other animals.



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Men who ate even a small part of an egg a day appeared to have twice the risk of their prostate cancer spreading

But what about eggs — how could eating less than one a day double the risk of cancer spreading?

The reason may be choline, a compound found in eggs.

Indeed, higher levels of choline in the blood have been associated with an increased risk of developing prostate cancer in the first place.

Another study discovered that men who consume two-and-a-half or more eggs per week — basically an egg every three days — may have an 81 per cent increased risk of dying from prostate cancer.

MILK

Milk contains growth hormones designed by Mother Nature to put a few hundred pounds on a baby calf within a few months. But are they good for us? Leading

Harvard University nutrition experts have warned that the hormones in dairy products could stimulate the growth of hormone-sensitive tumours — such as prostate cancer.

Not only that, but experimental evidence suggests that dairy may also promote the conversion of pre-cancerous lesions or mutated cells into invasive cancers. To date, there have been 14 studies in which organic cow's milk was dripped onto human prostate cancer cells in a laboratory petri dish.

In each experiment, the milk stimulated the growth of human prostate cancer cells, producing an average increase in cancer growth rate of more than 30 per cent.

In contrast, almond milk suppressed the growth of the cancer cells by more than 30 per cent. What happens in a test-tube or petri dish, though, doesn't necessarily happen in people. Nevertheless, a compilation of studies has concluded that cow's milk consumption is a risk factor for prostate cancer.

But, you may be wondering, if you don't drink milk, what will happen to your bones? Doesn't milk help prevent osteoporosis?

It turns out that the promised benefit may be just another empty marketing ploy. An analysis of many studies shows no significant protection.

Even if you were to start drinking milk during adolescence in an attempt to bolster peak bone mass, it probably wouldn't reduce your chances of fracture later in life. One recent set of studies involving 100,000 men and women followed for up to two decades even suggested milk may increase bone and hip fracture rates.

CAN YOU REVERSE PROSTATE CANCER?

Eating a varied plant-based diet — and avoiding all meat, fish, chicken and dairy products — may have much to recommend it, but it's certainly not for everyone. With this in mind, a group of researchers at the University of Massachusetts did a study on prostate cancer patients who agreed to get only half their protein from plant sources.

Happily, this half-vegan diet did, indeed, appear to slow down the growth of the cancer. Instead of doubling in size within 21 months, their tumours took 58 months to grow to the same dimensions. So, even tweaking your daily diet is well worth the effort.



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Researchers at the University of Massachusetts did a study on prostate cancer patients who agreed to get only half their protein from plant sources including broccoli

Photo by: file photo

Half a serving a day of broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower or kale, for instance, can cut the risk of cancer progression by more than half.

For another study, a research team recruited 93 men with prostate cancer who had chosen not to undergo conventional treatment.

MUNCH GARLIC FOR FEWER LOO TRIPS

If a healthy diet can slow down the abnormal growth of prostate cancer cells, can it also slow down the abnormal growth of normal prostate cells?

Benign prostatic hyperplasia (BPH) is a condition characterised by enlargement of the prostate gland, which leads to frequent trips to the loo.

It affects as many as half of all men by their 50s and 80 per cent by their 80s.

Yet historically, the condition was extremely rare among Chinese and Japanese men who ate a traditional plant-based diet.

Does this mean that we, too, can lessen the risk of BPH by eating differently?

Yes, according to researchers. Studies have shown that Westerners eating the same kind of diet as Chinese and Japanese men can suppress the abnormal growth of non-cancerous prostate cells — and the effect doesn't seem to dissipate with time.

Some plants may be particularly prostate-friendly. Men given three tablespoons of flaxseeds a day experienced relief comparable to that provided by commonly

prescribed drugs, yet without the drugs' side-effects, such as sexual dysfunction. Is it possible to prevent BPH in the first place?

Eating garlic and onions has been associated with a significantly lower risk, as has eating beans, split peas and lentils.

In general, cooked vegetables may work better than raw ones.

One group wasn't given any diet or lifestyle advice. The other was prescribed a strict diet centred on fruit, vegetables, whole grains and beans, and told to walk 30 minutes a day. Cancer progression was then tracked using PSA levels (a protein in the blood).

So, what happened? In the people who did nothing, PSA levels increased by 6 per cent in a year. That's what cancer tends to do: grow over time.

But among the healthy-living group, PSA levels decreased by 4 per cent, suggesting their tumours were shrinking.

A year after the study ended, the cancers in the control group patients had grown so much that 10 per cent of them needed to have surgery.

By contrast, none in the plant-based diet and lifestyle group ended up on the operating table. Does that mean men suffering from prostate cancer merely need to change their diets?

No — I certainly don't recommend that they ignore medical advice. They have nothing to lose and much to gain, however, by also changing what they eat.

Other research has shown that the blood of people on plant-based diets are able to fight cancer eight times better than the blood of people on a typical Western diet.

But, hang on — what if the benefits are down to exercise?

To find out, a research team compared three groups of men: a plant-based diet and exercise group, an exercise-only group and a group of sedentary people eating standard fare.

Would people who exercise hard enough and for long enough develop cancer-fighting abilities that rival that of strolling plant-eaters?

To find out, blood from each of the groups was dripped onto human prostate cancer cells growing in a petri dish.

Well, the blood of the sedentary lot wasn't completely defenceless. Even if you're a chip-eating couch potato, your blood may still be able to kill off 1–2 per cent of cancer cells.



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Half a serving a day of broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower or kale

Photo by: pictured

But the blood of those who had exercised strenuously for 15 years killed 2,000 per cent more cancer cells than the blood of the couch potatoes — a fantastic result.

Even better, though, was the blood of those in the plant-based diet and moderate exercise group, which wiped out an astounding 4,000 per cent more cancer cells than that of the blood of the couch potatoes.

In other words, thousands of hours in the gym appeared to be no match for a plant-based diet.

FLAXSEED

Prostate cancer rates vary around the world. For instance, African-American men are 120 times more likely to contract the disease than Chinese men.

This has been attributed in part to the higher amounts of animal protein and fat in Western diets.

Another factor, though, may be the soya in many Asian diets, which contains protective phytoestrogens.

These phytoestrogens are present in concentrated form in flaxseeds. So, researchers asked men who were to have cancerous prostates removed the following month to consume 3tbsp a day of flaxseed. After surgery, the tumours were examined. Within just a few weeks, the flaxseed appeared to have lowered cancer cell proliferation rates, while increasing the rate of cancer cell clearance. Even better, flaxseeds may also be able to prevent prostate cancer from advancing to that stage in the first place.

Fifteen men with prostate cancer were asked to eat three tablespoons of flaxseed a day for the six months until their next biopsy.

At that point, they all had a significant drop in PSA levels (a marker of prostate cancer growth) and cell proliferation rates — suggesting flaxseeds may thwart the progression of prostate cancer.

In two of the men, the PSA levels even dropped back to normal.

TIP: Always grind flaxseeds or buy them pre-ground — otherwise, they may pass through your body undigested.