

High Fiber Diet Can Cut Cancer Risk By 40%: Study

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LONDON (Reuters) - **A high fiber diet can slash the risk of developing deadly cancers by as much as 40%, scientists said Saturday.**

Results from the biggest ever study into diet and cancer, involving 400,000 people from nine countries and presented at an international conference in France, showed fiber was particularly important in reducing cancer of the colon and rectum.

"These are the first positive results for the benefits of fiber from such a large group. We placed 400,000 people on the study into five sets according to their consumption of fiber," Professor Sheila Bingham of the Dunn Human Nutrition Unit at Cambridge University said in a statement released in London.

"The group eating the most fiber reduced their risk of colorectal cancer by as much as 40%," she added.

The findings were part of the EPIC (European Prospective Investigation of Cancer and Nutrition) study that was reported at the European Conference on Nutrition and Care in Lyon, France.

Medical experts believe up to 30% of all cancers in the developed world are associated with nutritional factors and could be avoided by better-balanced diets.

The EPIC study, which began 15 years ago, also showed a decreased chance of developing colon cancer in people eating lots of fish, but a raised risk in those consuming large amounts of preserved meats such as ham, bacon and salami.

People are advised to eat five portions of fruit and vegetables a day to achieve optimum health and avoid cancer.

Professor Nick Day said the landmark study should set the record straight on diet and cancer.

"There have been reports recently that appear to suggest fruit and vegetable consumption isn't important in reducing the risk of colorectal cancer," Day said.

"This wide-ranging study is likely to give us a much truer picture of the links between cancer and diet," he added.

The EPIC study also showed that people who smoke a pack of cigarettes a day and drink more than a bottle of wine are 50 times more likely to suffer from throat cancers.

Eating poultry did not increase the risk of cancer and may have a protective effect, according to the report.

"These findings are important because of the sheer scope of the EPIC study. They put fiber firmly back on the menu as an important part of a healthy diet," said Professor Gordon McVie, the director general of the Cancer Research Campaign, which sponsored Bingham's research.

The European Conference on Nutrition and Cancer, which began Thursday, is looking at the impact of different types of food on the disease.