

Usda Studies Diets Associated With Esophageal Cancer

6/14/2002-Scientists funded by the Agricultural Research Service recently studied dietary habits that might ward off esophageal cancer, a form so deadly only about 12% of those diagnosed survive five years.

Other studies have found a strong association between esophageal cancer and acid reflux disease or gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD), which affects 7 million Americans annually.

The ARS-funded analysis was overseen by Katherine Tucker, director of the Dietary Assessment Research Program at the Jean Mayer USDA Human Nutrition Research Center on Aging at Tufts University in Boston, Mass., and included researchers from the National Cancer Institute.

The scientists looked at consumption habits of about 700 people who were asked to recall how frequently they ate 54 specific food items. Their responses ultimately formed the basis of six dietary patterns identified. The dietary patterns were labeled “healthy,” “high meat,” “high salty snacks,” “high dessert,” “high milk,” and “high white bread.”

The “healthy” dietary pattern tended to have the lowest risk of esophageal cancer. That diet was high in fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Foods eaten in that group were good sources of carotenoids, vitamin C, **dietary fiber** and B vitamins. The USDA Food Guide Pyramid suggests two to three servings of protein each day from a varied group that includes poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts, as well as meats. But those in the “high-meat” pattern consumed about three servings per day of red or processed meats alone. Those whose diet fell in the “high-meat” pattern--who also had lower fruit and vegetable intakes--had a 3.6 times higher risk of esophageal cancer than did those in the “healthy” dietary pattern. They also had an almost three times higher risk for stomach cancer.

Dietary Habits Associated With Esophageal Cancer

By **Rosalie Marion Bliss**

June 13, 2002

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While grouping data by patterns is a subjective science, the researchers found that similar patterns emerged during other investigations involving various populations. Still, larger conformational studies are needed. The research was published in the January issue of the [**American Journal of Clinical Nutrition**](#).

ARS is the chief scientific research agency in the [**U.S. Department of Agriculture**](#).