

Eating Burnt Meat Increases Pancreatic Cancer Risk

Regularly eating meat cooked at a high temperature, to the point of charring, could increase the risk of pancreatic cancer by 60 per cent.

Our findings in this study are further evidence that turning down the heat when grilling, frying, and barbecuing to avoid excess burning or charring of the meat may be a sensible way for some people to lower their risk for getting pancreatic cancer," said Kristin Anderson of the University of Minnesota, who led the study. Anderson said the research, presented at the meeting of the American Association for Cancer Research, in Denver, Colorado, found that well and very well done meats cooked by frying, grilling or barbecuing formed carcinogens. Meat that is baked, stewed or cooked at lower temperatures does not form carcinogens, she added.

The study tracked the eating habits of 62,581 healthy people over nine years, after which 208 cases of pancreatic cancer were found. Subjects who preferred very well done steak were nearly 60 per cent as likely to get pancreatic cancer as those who ate steak less well done or did not eat meat at all. "Those with the highest intake of very well done meat had a 70 per cent higher risk for pancreatic cancer over those with the lowest consumption," Anderson said.

"We cannot say with absolute certainty that the risk is increased due to carcinogens formed in burnt meat," said Anderson. "However, those who enjoy either fried or barbecued meat should consider turning down the heat or cutting off burned portions when it's finished; cook meat sufficiently to kill bacteria without excess charring," Anderson said. She also said that the precursors of cancer-causing compounds can be reduced "by microwaving the meat for a few minutes and pouring off the juices before cooking it on the grill".