



THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT MEAT: WHY WE CAN ALL ENJOY RED MEAT AS PART OF A BALANCED DIET

Meat is once again under the microscope as part of a new BBC programme on 'The Truth About Meat.' This is a great opportunity to put the record straight on what World Health Organisation (WHO) actually said about meat and cancer in their 2015 report, and to look in detail at how much meat we eat in the UK compared with recommendations.

Emeritus Professor of Neurobiology at the University of Cardiff and a member of the Meat Advisory Panel, Professor Robert Pickard notes: "In my opinion red and processed meat has been wrongly and unfairly demonised by the IARC report last year and the subsequent classifications received I do not agree with. Red and processed meat do not give you cancer.

"In no way whatsoever does eating red or processed meat carry a similar health risk as smoking tobacco. What's more the IARC classification noted last year is also puzzling given there is a lack of consensus within the scientific community and the **extremely weak evidence** regarding the causal relationship between red meat and cancer.

"The other crucial inaccurately communicated point is that we are eating too much processed meat. The IARC ruling identified intakes of 50g of processed meat every day leads to a very small increase in the risk of bowel cancer. However, the National Diet and Nutrition Survey¹(NDNS) shows that in the UK our average daily intake of processed meat is 15.5g - so we would need to eat at least three times the amount of processed meat to increase the risk.

"Eating this amount over a lifetime was estimated to raise bowel cancer risk by around 17% which sounds high but equates to one extra case per 100 people². In comparison, smoking is 35 times more risky to health.

¹ Bates B et al. (2016) National Diet and Nutrition Survey, rolling programme years 5-6. London: PHE/FSA.

² www.sciencemediacentre.org/xpert-reaction-to-iarc-classification-of-processed-meat-as-carcinogenic-to-

"So, at present, most of us in the UK don't eat enough red meat to justify concerns about bowel cancer.

"Current average intakes of red and processed meat also fit well within the 70 grams daily limit recommended by the UK's Scientific Advisory Committee on Nutrition which looked at all the data on meat and cancer in 2010³. This level was proposed to balance any risks to bowel cancer alongside the clear nutritional benefits of including red meat in the diet, for example the significant contribution to iron, zinc and vitamin D intakes.

"Cutting meat out of the diet appears to offer no benefits to bowel cancer risk anyway as European studies show similar rates of bowel cancer in meat eaters versus vegetarians⁴. Randomised clinical trials also conclude that there are no advantages to body weight⁵, blood pressure⁶ or cholesterol levels⁷ by swapping red meat for white meat or plant foods, as long as lean cuts of red meat are selected.

"More than 90% of the population eats meat. The healthiest way to enjoy red meat in the diet is to stick within the 70 gram daily limit (as cooked weight), avoid burning or charring the meat, and serve with plenty of vegetables. That is the truth of the matter".

-----ENDS-----

Notes to Editors

British sausages and burgers are classified as fresh meat, not processed meat as, unlike mainland European versions; they are generally not cured or smoked.

[humans-group-1-and-red-meat-as-probably-carcinogenic-to-humans-group-2a/](#)

³ SACN (2010) Iron and Health. London: SACN.

⁴ Key TJ et al. (2014) Cancer in British vegetarians: updated analyses of 4998 incident cancers in a cohort of 32,491 meat eaters, 8612 fish eaters, 18,298 vegetarians, and 2246 vegans. *Am J Clin Nutr* 100(suppl): 378S–85S.

⁵ Turner KM et al. (2015) Red meat, dairy, and insulin sensitivity: a randomized crossover intervention study. *Am J Clin Nutr* 101: 1173-9.

⁶ Hodgson JM et al. (2006) Partial substitution of carbohydrate intake with protein intake from lean red meat lowers blood pressure in hypertensive persons. *Am J Clin Nutr* 83: 780-7.

⁷ Davidson MH et al. (1999) Comparison of the effects of lean red meat vs lean white meat on serum lipid levels among free-living persons with hypercholesterolemia: a long-term, randomized clinical trial. *Arch Intern Med* 159: 1331-8.

WHO defines processed meat as “meat that has been transformed through salting, curing, fermentation, smoking, or other processes to enhance flavour or improve preservation”⁸.

The Meat Advisory Panel (MAP) is a group of experts who provide independent and objective information about red meat and its role as part of a healthy, balanced diet. MAP is supported by an unrestricted educational grant from AHDB Beef & Lamb and AHDB Pork, divisions of the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB).

For more information about the role of red meat and a selection of versatile recipes using pork, beef and lamb visit www.meatmatters.com or please contact:

DID YOU KNOW?

Lean red meat is lower in fat and saturated fat than ever before. Compared with 2.4g of fat in roast chicken on average, there’s just 2g of fat in pork, 2.9g in beef, 3.8g in ham and 5.3g in lamb⁸.

Weight guide for cooked meat:

- 1 grilled rasher of back bacon 25g
- 1 slice of ham 23g
- 3 slices of roast lamb 80g
- Mince Bolognese 80g

-ENDS-

Useful facts & stats:

Lean red meat plays an important part in a balanced diet and can help supply vital nutrients. However, some of these nutrients are consumed in lower than recommended amounts across the age spectrum as summarised below:

- **Infants and pre-school children** - Studies show that diets in this age group can be low in vitamin A, vitamin D, iron and zinc.
- **Pre-pubescent children** – Diets were found to be low in vitamin A, magnesium, iron and zinc. Boys tended to have higher intakes of iron and thiamin than girls.
- **Teenagers (13 to 18 years)** – 30% of teenage girls have low iron stores putting them at risk of iron deficiency. 20% of teenagers are clinically deficient in vitamin D.

- **Adults of reproductive age (19-50 years)** – Diets, particularly for females, fall short in magnesium and iron, as well as zinc, selenium and potassium.
- **Pregnancy and lactation** - Women on average fail to get enough calcium, magnesium, iron, iodine, selenium, potassium and vitamin D.
- **Middle-age and older age (50 years and above)** – High quality protein, as found in red meat, becomes important in the older years to help maintain muscle strength and function. Iron in red meat may help to support women through the menopausal years when menorrhagia (abnormally heavy bleeding at menstruation) is common.
- **Older-age (75 years and beyond)** – High quality protein continues to be important for the prevention of sarcopenia (muscle wasting). Vitamin D helps to prevent falls.

For more information about the role of red meat and a selection of versatile recipes using pork, beef and lamb visit www.meatmatters.com or please contact:

Nicky Smith: nicky.smith@nexuspr.com 0207 052 8850; 07867 513 361

Isla Haslam: isla.haslam@nexuspr.com on 020 7250 8880

Charlotte Milton: charlotte.milton@nexuspr.com 0207 052 8856 / 07482 107 207

Philippa Short: philippa.short@nexuspr.com 0207 052 8833

⁸ www.iarc.fr/en/media-centre/iarcnews/pdf/Monographs-Q&A_Vol114.pdf