

Like Bacon, Sausage and Hot Dogs? Then Beware: They May Raise Your Risk of Death, New Study Finds.

By [Beth Greenfield, Shine Staff](#) | [Shine Food](#) – Thu, Mar 7, 2013 12:46 PM EST



Beware of bacon. Photo: Getty Images/Flickr/Cara Slifka

You know in your gut (and your gut knows it, too) that **bacon** is bad for you. And yet you can't resist. But a **new study** might make it easier. It found that consuming high amounts of the breakfast favorite and other processed meats can raise your risk of premature death by 44 percent.

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The research, conducted by scientists across 10 European countries, included tracking the health of more than 450,000 participants over the course of a decade or more. Of the 26,000-plus who died during those years, the ones who ate the most processed meats—5.5 ounces or more every day of bacon (so, five strips), sausage, hotdogs, salami, ham and the like—were 44 percent more likely to have died than those who ate little or none. In other terms, the meats were to blame in about 1 in 30 deaths, the main causes of which were cancer and heart disease.

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The aim of the study, "Meat Consumption and Mortality: Results from the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition," was to see how eating red meat, poultry and processed meat did or did not increase people's risk of death. And while researchers found that eating lots of poultry was not to blame, and that consuming red meat was found only slightly to blame, it was clear that indulging in processed meats was a serious problem.

The good news, though, is that the scientists concluded people could prevent the higher risk of death simply by reducing their intake to less than three-quarters of an ounce of processed meat—about one slice of bacon—daily.

Research participants, recruited between 1992 and 2000 depending on the country, were between 35 and 70 years old, and answered questionnaires about their meat intake and other habits. But because the study was large, researchers were able to separate out factors like smoking and alcohol intake to find that intake of processed meat alone can send you to an early grave.

The study used data only in France, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands, the UK, Greece, Germany, Sweden, Norway and Denmark. But folks in the US can also take the findings to heart, as recent **data** shows that Americans consume an average of 4.5 ounces of meat a day, and that 22 percent of that is of the processed variety.

So why are ham and hotdogs so unhealthy, exactly?

"Processed meats such as sausages, salami and bacon have a higher content of saturated fatty acids and cholesterol than fresh red meat," the study reads, adding that the proportion of fat in sausages often reaches at least 50 percent of the weight.

“Both high saturated fat and cholesterol intake have been found to be related to the risk of coronary heart disease,” the findings continue. “Also, processed meat is treated by salting, curing, or smoking,” with processes that introduce carcinogens or their precursors, such as polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, heterocyclic aromatic amines and nitrosamines.

[Tofu Pup](#), anyone?

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