

Calcium cuts colon cancer risk

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Regular consumption of calcium appears to cut the risk of developing colon cancer or other tumours of the digestive system, a new study said.

'In both men and women, dairy food and calcium intakes were inversely associated with cancers of the digestive system,' the authors of the study in the Archives of Internal Medicine wrote.

Women who consumed the most calcium, some 1,881 milligrams a day, cut their cancer risk by 23 per cent over those who had the lowest calcium intake of around 494 milligrams a day.

For men, those with the highest intake of calcium some 1,530 milligrams daily, had a 16 per cent smaller risk of developing cancer, the study authors, from the National Cancer Institute in Maryland, said.

Scientist Yikyung Park and his colleagues based their results on data gathered from 293,907 men and 198,903 women, aged between 50 and 71, who participated in the National Institutes of Health-AARP Diet and Health Study.

Participants filled in a food questionnaire when they enrolled in the study between 1995 and 1996, reporting how much and how often they consumed dairy products and other foods.

Over the next seven years of follow-up, some 36,965 cancer cases were identified in men and 16,605 in women.

Their records were then matched against state cancer registries identifying new cases of cancer through 2003.

The study found that there appeared to be no link between increased calcium consumption and a fall in prostate or breast cancers.

'In conclusion, our findings suggest that calcium intake consistent with current recommendations is associated with a lower risk of total cancer in women and cancers of the digestive system, especially colorectal cancer, in both men and women,' the authors write.