

In the news

SUGAR CANED

A heavy intake of sugary drinks can almost double the risk of developing pancreatic cancer, according to a recently published report.

Researchers at the Karolinska Institute in Sweden found that, of 80,000 men and women studied from 1987 to 2005, those who drank two or more fizzy or syrup-based drinks a day had a 90% higher risk of developing pancreatic cancer. The news was also bad for tea and coffee drinkers, as the study reported a 70% higher risk for those who had about 5 cups per day with added sugar. At the end of the study period in June 2005, 131 members of the study group had developed pancreatic cancer.

This is the first time researchers have shown that the consumption of sweetened food and drink affects the chance of developing pancreatic cancer. It is thought that the increased risk could be related to the effect of sugar on glucose metabolism and insulin action.

Susanna Larsson, the lead author of the study, explained "If you eat and drink more sugary food it increases blood sugar levels which affect the amount of work the pancreas has to do. It could stimulate growth of the pancreas and this could lead to cancer" (<http://www.dailymail.co.uk>, 11 November 2006). Henry Scowcroft, science information officer at Cancer Research UK commented "This report highlights the need for further research to understand the specific effect of sugar intake on pancreatic cancer risk" (<http://www.bbc.co.uk>, 10 November 2006).

According to the American Cancer Society, pancreatic cancer accounts for around 6% of all cancer deaths in the United States. However, it is often not diagnosed until it has spread beyond the pancreas. "It is perhaps the most serious form of cancer, with very poor prognosis for its victims. Since it is difficult to treat and is often discovered too late, it is particularly important that we learn to prevent it," said Larsson (<http://www.reuters.com>, 10 November 2006).

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