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# Eat less meat to keep lean

**B**EING a little less carnivorous may help you stay slim. A study found that people who ate more meat gained more weight over five years than those who ate less meat but the same amount of calories.

The researchers studied more than 100,000 men and 270,000 women from 10 different European countries taking part in a study of cancer and nutrition and other lifestyle factors.

Danes, Germans, Spaniards and Swedes were the biggest meat eaters, with men eating around 300 calories worth of meat daily and women consuming 200 calories. Among all meat-eating populations, Greeks ate the least (about 200 calories a day for men and 140 for women).

Over the five-year follow-up period, both men and women gained about 450g a year, on average, although women gained a little less.

And the more meat a person ate, the more they gained. For every additional 250g meat a person ate daily (the equivalent of a 250g, 450-calorie steak), their five-year weight gain would be about 2kg more, the researchers calculate.

When the researchers looked at different types of meat separately, they found the strongest association with weight gain for poultry, followed by processed meats and red meat.

Heavy meat eating could be part of an overall unhealthy diet or unhealthy lifestyle, the researchers wrote in the *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*.

Because meat is "energy-dense" (meaning it packs more calories by weight than veggies or fruits, for example), it could influence appetite control, they add.

But the researchers did attempt to take overall dietary pattern into account as well as education, physical activity level, whether or not people smoked, and their total calorie intake.

Based on the findings, a person who cut his meat consumption by 250g daily could conceivably reduce his five-year weight gain by about 1.8kg.

The researchers said the findings

do not support that a high-protein diet prevents obesity or promotes long-term weight loss, contrary to what has been advocated.

— Reuters

■ PAP smear in women under 21 does more harm than good, according to new guidelines from the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists.

In most cases, such tests reveal only human papillomavirus (HPV) infections, which rarely lead to cervical cancer in women under 21.

Doctors usually go on to do a small biopsy of the cervix if a pap smear shows abnormal results. They also monitor the young

women more closely.

The new guidelines, published in the journal *Obstetrics & Gynecology*, reinforce earlier recommendations issued last November. But they add that adolescents with compromised immune systems — due to HIV infections, organ transplants or long-term steroid use, for instance — should not wait until 21 to be screened.

Although this group makes up less than one per cent of adolescents, their weak immune systems may allow HPV to develop into cancer much more easily than in healthy individuals.

Prior recommendations called for annual cervical cancer screening to start three years after a woman first becomes sexually active, or by age 21.

HPV is the most common sexually transmitted disease in the world.

In the November guidelines, it was recommended that women aged between 21 and 30 should undergo cervical cancer screening once every two years instead of an annual exam. Those 30 and older can be screened once every three years.

The new recommendations do not refer to women between 21 and 30. — Reuters

■ PEOPLE who spend a lot of time using a mobile phone can double

their chances of developing chronic tinnitus — persistent ringing,

roaring or hissing which only an affected person can hear.

About 10 to 15 per cent of people in developed countries suffer from chronic tinnitus, and the prevalence is rising, in part due to greater awareness of the condition, say researchers.

While there are known triggers for tinnitus such as some ear disorders or a head injury, scientists are not sure what can fully explain the trend. Austrian researchers writing in the *Journal of Occupational Medicine* suggest that mobile phones — or the way people use them — may be linked to the condition.

Previous large-scale studies have found no link between the energy emitted from phones and cancer or other health conditions.

The latest study followed 100 patients who had suffered from tinnitus symptoms for at least three months, and 100 people without the condition, for a year. Of those

with tinnitus, 38 patients described it as distressing "most of the time". More than one in four (29 per cent) also had associated vertigo.

All participants were questioned about the type of phone they used, and where, as mobile phone output tends to be stronger in rural areas. They were also asked about the intensity and duration of calls, ear preference, and use of handheld devices.

Virtually all the participants were mobile users, but only 84 tinnitus sufferers and 78 in the comparison group were using a mobile when symptoms first appeared.

The results showed that the patients who had used a mobile before the onset of tinnitus were 37 per cent more likely to have the condition than those in the comparison group. Those who reported using their mobiles for an average of 10 minutes a day were about 70 per cent more likely to have the condition.

Most people used their phones on both ears, and those who had

used a mobile for four years or more were twice as likely to have tinnitus compared with those in the comparison group.

The researchers from Medical University of Vienna, said one

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explanation for a potential link could be the cochlea and ear canal absorbing a considerable amount of energy emitted from a mobile phone.

But they added that factors such as posture when walking with a phone, or having the volume of a phone turned up loud, may also explain the link.

Any patient with ear disease, noise-induced hearing loss, high blood pressure, or who was on medication known to boost the risk of tinnitus was excluded from the study.

People were likely to over or underestimate their mobile phone usage and the length of calls, said the researchers. — **The Times**

■ **MEN** who enjoy their morning cup of coffee can drink a little easier. A new research review finds that java lovers appear no more likely to develop prostate cancer than other men.

In an analysis of a dozen studies on coffee intake and prostate cancer risk, researchers found no strong evidence linking the beverage to either an increased or decreased risk of the disease. The findings, published in the medical journal *BJU International*, add to the conflicting body of research on coffee and cancer risk.

A number of studies have found connections between regular coffee consumption and certain cancers — a decreased risk in some cases, and an increased risk in others. A study published last month, for example, found that coffee drinkers had a lower risk of head and neck cancers than non-drinkers did, with the risk declining as coffee consumption rose.

To investigate further, researchers from the National Cancer Center in Goyang, South Korea, pooled the results of 12 previous studies on coffee intake and prostate cancer risk.

Overall, they found no strong relationship between men's reported coffee-drinking habits and their risk of prostate cancer. They said the discrepancies among past studies on coffee and prostate cancer risk may be explained by the studies' designs.

Of those studies, eight were case-control studies, where people

with a disease are compared with similar individuals — typically of the same age and sex — who are free of the disease.

When the team looked only at the case-control studies, there was an association between greater

coffee intake and higher prostate cancer risk. But the same was not true of the remaining four studies, which were cohort studies.

Still, it is plausible, based on lab research, that coffee could have both positive and negative effects on the risks of some cancers.

Animal research suggests, for example, that caffeine can either suppress or stimulate tumours, depending on which animal species is studied and the point in the cancer process at which the caffeine is administered.

In addition to caffeine, coffee contains more than 1,000 chemicals, some of which appear to have antioxidant effects that can help protect cells from damage that can lead to cancer.

But exactly how all those chemicals interact in the human body, and whether coffee has real effects on the risks of various cancers, remains unclear. — **Reuters**

■ **OLDER** adults who eat fatty fish at least once a week may have a lower risk of serious vision loss from age-related macular degeneration, according to an American study.

The study by researchers at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore does not prove that eating fish cuts the risk of developing the advanced stages of age-related macular degeneration, or AMD.

But the researchers said the findings add to evidence from previous studies showing that fish eaters tend to have lower rates of AMD than people who infrequently eat fish.

The study, reported in the journal *Ophthalmology*, also supports the theory that Omega-3 fatty acids — found most abundantly in oily fish such as salmon, mackerel and albacore tuna — may affect the development or progression of AMD.

For the study, the researchers analysed data from 2,520 adults aged 65 to 84 who underwent eye exams and completed detailed dietary questionnaires. Fifteen per cent were found to have early or intermediate-stage AMD while just under three per cent were in the advanced stage of the disease.

Participants who ate one or more servings of such fish each week were 60 per cent less likely to have advanced AMD than those who averaged less than a serving per week.

Overall, the researchers found there was no clear relationship between participants' reported fish intake and the risk of AMD, but there was a connection between higher intake of Omega-3-rich fish and the odds of advanced AMD.

AMD is caused by abnormal blood vessel growth behind the retina or breakdown of light-sensitive cells within the retina itself — both of which can cause serious vision impairment.

The disease is the leading cause of blindness in older adults. — **Reuters**

■ **NOW** a panty liner is more than just to absorb your discharge.

The UFresh panty liner contains natural herbs and environment-friendly materials that can be easily recycled.

The herbs used are those that have been proven beneficial to women traditionally such as kaciip fatimah, manjakani, lobata, betel leaves and garlic.

The UFresh Herbal Pantyliners use all of these natural ingredients as a remedy, prevention and to restore the overall well-being of women's vaginal health.

According to the company, body warmth will induce these herbs to be naturally absorbed into the body. The halal-certified UFresh also comes scented in lavender to keep the user comfortable throughout the day.

■ **A PUBLIC** forum on eye development will be organised by the International Specialist Clinic as part of its Public Education Programme. The talk by consultant ophthalmologist Dr Rawindar Ranu will be held on Aug 7 from 2.30pm to 4.30pm. For details, call 03-8076 1767.

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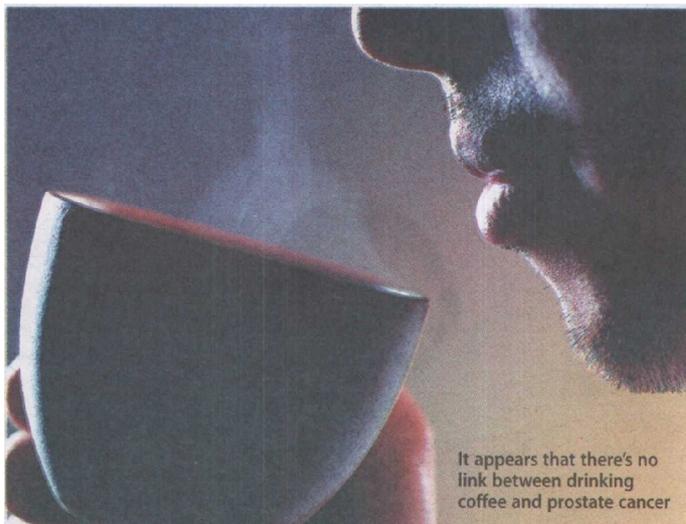
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Those who eat more meat are likely to gain more weight



Those who spend a lot of time using a mobile phone double their chances of developing chronic tinnitus



It appears that there's no link between drinking coffee and prostate cancer