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Med diet 'cuts lung disease risk'



Eating a Mediterranean diet halves the risk of serious lung disease like emphysema and bronchitis, a study says.

Grouped under the umbrella term chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), they are expected to become the world's third leading cause of death by 2020.

French researchers tracked almost 43,000 men for 12 years.

The Thorax study suggests the diet - with much fruit, vegetables, grains and fish - is rich in anti-oxidants, which cut the risk of tissue inflammation.

Alternatively, lower levels of sugar and nitrates in the diet - both of which have been linked to impaired lung function - may play a role. A more standard Western diet tends to include higher levels of processed foods, refined sugars, and cured and red meats than the Mediterranean diet.

The researchers, from the French research institute Inserm, found that a Mediterranean diet was associated with a 50% lower risk of developing COPD than the Western diet - even after taking factors such as smoking and age into account.

And men who ate a predominantly Western diet were more than four times as likely to develop COPD.

Other benefits

The study showed that the higher the compliance with a Mediterranean diet, the lower the risk of developing COPD over the 12-year period.

Conversely, the higher the compliance with the Western diet, the higher was the risk of developing COPD.

Last month, an international study reported that a Mediterranean diet helped prevent the development of asthma and respiratory allergies in children.

And last year, US researchers found that eating a Mediterranean diet could reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's.

Dr Keith Prowse, chairman of the British Lung Foundation, said:
"COPD is a hugely disabling illness and we welcome the findings of this large study which provide an interesting insight into a possible link between diet and the disease.

"COPD is the only major cause of death whose incidence is on the increase in the UK and we urgently need more research into all aspects of the disease so that health services can prevent and treat it more effectively."