

Pomegranates 'slow tumour growth'



Pomegranates have been linked to many health benefits

Pomegranate juice may help to slow down the progress of prostate cancer, research suggests.

Tests on mice showed the juice dramatically slowed down prostate cancer cell growth.

Pomegranates, native to the Middle East, are packed with healthy anti-oxidants and anti-inflammatory agents.

The study, by the University of Wisconsin, appears in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

Prostate cancer is now the most common cancer diagnosed in men in the UK.

Every year over 30,000 men are diagnosed and 10,000 men die from it.

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Professor Hasan Mukhtar

Previous research has shown pomegranate extract is effective against tumours in mouse skin.

And scientists in Israel have shown that drinking a daily glass of the fruit's juice can reduce the risk of cardiovascular disease.

The Wisconsin team first tested the juice on laboratory cultures of human prostate cancer cells.

They found the extract killed the cancer cells - and the higher

the dose, the more cells died.

Supplemented diet

Next the team injected mice with human prostate cancer cells. One group was given pure water, and two others received water supplemented with 0.1% or 0.2% pomegranate juice.

Cancer progression was significantly slowed in mice receiving the higher pomegranate dose.

Their blood contained decreased levels of prostate-specific antigen (PSA), a marker commonly used to monitor prostate cancer.

In comparison, tumours grew much faster in animals that were given only water.

Lead researcher Professor Hasan Mukhtar said: "Our study, while early, adds to growing evidence that pomegranates contain very powerful agents against cancer, particularly prostate cancer.

"There is good reason now to test this fruit in humans, both for cancer prevention and treatment."

Dr Chris Hiley, of The Prostate Cancer Charity, said: "This is useful research as it might well benefit both men who may get prostate cancer and men who already have it.

"It's still too early to know what, if anything, the science will tell us about potential effects in men, but it is not too soon to point out that diet is plainly significant in the development of prostate cancer.

"As there are sound reasons for adopting a healthy diet with a generally increased intake of fruit and vegetables, why not consider pomegranate, and its juice, as one of the ways of achieving this."