# Yoghurt consumption may lower bowel cancer risk, expert reveals



A prominent scientist has shed light on a potential dietary change that could significantly reduce the risk of bowel cancer, a growing health concern. Professor Justin Stebbing, a leading figure in Biomedical Sciences at Anglia Ruskin University, shared insights on The Conversation platform regarding the impact of yoghurt consumption on cancer prevention.

Rising colorectal cancer rates have alarmed health professionals, particularly among individuals under the age of 55, where global cases have doubled in recent years. Dietary habits, especially the rise in ultra-processed foods, have been identified as a significant factor in this upward trend.

Prof Stebbing discussed the emerging evidence indicating that regular yoghurt consumption may offer protection against aggressive forms of colorectal cancer by positively influencing the gut microbiome—the collection of natural bacteria residing in the digestive system. "As a consultant oncologist, many people have asked me how their risk can be reduced," he noted, further emphasising the importance of a balanced gut microbiome in maintaining overall health, immune function, and potentially reducing cancer risks.

He elaborated that "the gut bacteria can live inside cancer itself, and in general a healthy balance of these bacteria is thought to be essential for maintaining a strong immune system and preventing inflammation, which can contribute to cancer development." This revelation underscores the potential impact of specific dietary choices on long-term health outcomes.

The findings reported by Prof Stebbing show that consuming two or more servings of yoghurt weekly is associated with a diminished risk of developing a specific type of bowel cancer known as "Bifidobacterium-positive proximal colon cancer." This aggressive cancer type is found on the right side of the colon and is often linked with poorer survival rates.

This research drew from data involving over 150,000 individuals tracked for decades, with participants providing information about their yoghurt consumption every two years. Additionally, the study examined the presence of Bifidobacterium in the tumour tissue of 3,079 colorectal cancer patients.

While yoghurt consumption was not found to reduce the risk for all forms of colorectal cancer, those who consumed it regularly exhibited a decreased likelihood of developing the aforementioned aggressive type.

Nutritional expert Professor Tim Spector, known for creating the Zoe app, has incorporated yoghurt into his diet several times each week, citing its benefits for gut health, which is integral to digestion and immune function. He commented, "For yoghurts I never go for fat-free products. I don't like the taste of them and they're not good for my sugar spikes either," highlighting a personal commitment to choosing fat-containing yoghurt, which he believes influences satiety and flavour preference.

In addition to its potential cancer-fighting properties, yoghurt is a rich source of calcium, promoting bone health and potentially mitigating osteoporosis risks. Emerging research also suggests links between yoghurt consumption and lower blood pressure, reduced heart disease risk, and even a potential protective effect against type 2 diabetes.

According to data from the 2024 National Cancer Registry of Ireland, approximately 2,500 individuals are diagnosed with bowel cancer annually in Ireland, comprising 1,452 men and 1,047 women.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.the-express.com/news/health/168881/prevent-cancer-risk-food> - This URL supports the claim about yoghurt's potential benefits in reducing cancer risk, particularly through its live cultures of beneficial bacteria. It highlights the work of Prof. Stebbing on yoghurt's impact on cancer prevention.
2. <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/06/190618142057.htm> - This URL would provide additional context about the role of diet in preventing colorectal cancer, although specific details on yoghurt are not mentioned here, it aligns with discussions on dietary influences on cancer risk.
3. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/health/article/ultra-processed-foods> - This URL supports the claim about the rise in ultra-processed foods contributing to health issues, including higher rates of certain cancers. It explains how dietary habits are linked to increased health risks.
4. <https://www.cancer.org/cancer/colon-rectal-cancer/about/key-statistics.html> - This URL provides context about rising colorectal cancer rates, particularly among younger populations. It offers data and insights into trends and factors influencing cancer incidence.
5. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/yogurt-and-your-gut> - This URL supports the claim about yoghurt's benefits for gut health, highlighting its positive impact on the gut microbiome, which is crucial for overall health and immune function.
6. <https://www.cancer.ie/cancer-statistics> - This URL supports the claim about bowel cancer statistics in Ireland, providing data on annual diagnoses and the demographic breakdown of those affected.
7. <https://www.irishmirror.ie/news/irish-news/health-news/oncology-expert-says-eat-breakfast-35043807> - Please view link - unable to able to access data