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MailOnline

Olive oil protects against breast cancer by launching multiple attacks against tumours

By [Fiona Macrae](#)

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A drizzle of olive oil a day could help keep breast cancer at bay.

Research shows that the Mediterranean oil mounts a multi-pronged attack on the tumours, stunting their growth, driving their cells to implode and protecting against potentially-cancerous damage to DNA.

The Spanish scientists, from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, set out to find out why previous studies had linked an olive oil-rich diet, to lower odds of various cancers.



Olive oil switches off proteins that cancer cells rely on to stay alive

In experiments on rats, they showed that olive oil thwarts a gene that drives the growth of breast tumours.

The oil, a cornerstone of the Mediterranean diet, also switched off proteins that cancer cells rely on to stay alive.

If that isn't enough, it also protects DNA from damage that can lead to cancer, the journal *Carcinogenesis* reports.

Researcher Dr Eduard Escrich recommends we all get 50ml, or 10 teaspoons of high quality, extra virgin olive oil a day. Only long-term use will give results.

Breast cancer is Britain's most common form of the disease, with more than 45,000 cases diagnosed a year and around 1,000 lives lost a month.

A second Spanish study found that olive oil 'turns down' genes linked to hardening of the arteries and heart disease.

Researcher Dr Maria Isabel Covas, of the Institut Municipal d'Investigacio Medica in Barcelona, said: 'Knowing which genes can be modulated by diet in a healthy way can help people select healthy foods.'

Dr Gerald Weissmann, editor-in-chief on the FASEB journal, which published the finding, said: 'This study is groundbreaking because it shows that olive oil and a Mediterranean diet affect our bodies in a far more significant way than previously believed.'

The finding provides more impetus for healthy eating - as well as ideas for new drugs to tackle heart problems, he said.

The Mediterranean diet has previously been credited with protecting against all major diseases - including cancer, heart disease, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's.

Its health benefits come from it being high in fruit, vegetables, fish, nuts, whole grains and healthy fats such as those in olive oil, while low in red meat and dairy products. Drinking alcohol, particularly red wine, is encouraged in moderation.

Greeks are the biggest consumers of olive oil in the world - eating 20 times more than Britons - while Italians eat ten times as much.

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debs of burnley - they haven't cut down masses of virgin jungle that contain so many endangered species like the orangutan, to grow...rapeseed. rubber and palm plantations are crops being used by developing countries in the tropics to make money. this removal of some very important ecosystems are damaging us all eventually. YOU are amazing..in a very disturbing way.

- kate, hawaii, 04/7/2010 06:33

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If you rub it on your skin you smell awful.

- Lucy, London, 03/7/2010 20:00

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Amazing, John of Bath. You would avoid palm oil and risk your health because of so called 'ecological' concerns, but you will no doubt eat soya without such whims which does far more damage to the land, and to you.

I'd rather be healthy with palm and coconut oil and lose a few acres of trees, than be poisoned by so called 'healthy' vegetable oils like rapeseed.

- Debs, Burnley, 03/7/2010 17:23

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Sophia Loren bathes in it! I love the stuff and use it on dry skin after a warm shower. Brilliant. Good to eat and cook with AND CHEAP

- amazonmothe, hastings, 03/7/2010 06:23

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