Sugar Stimulates Cancer Growth

October 27, 2017

Studies have shown that some foods increase the risk of developing cancer. Now, new study findings published in Nature Communications suggest that there's a link between sugar and tumor growth, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution reports.

For the nine-year study, researchers from Belgium looked to determine the correlation between "the strength of the Warburg effect and tumor aggressiveness." The Warburg effect refers to the process by which cancer cells produce energy via the fermentation of glucose, which leads to tumor growth. For their experiment, scientists used yeast cells, since their fermentation process is similar to that of cells.

Findings revealed that sugar not only causes tumors to grow but also makes cells multiply faster. The sugar also produces more Ras proteins, known to be the most common cancer-causing genes, which help fuel aggressive tumors.

"Our research reveals how the hyperactive sugar consumption of cancerous cells leads to a vicious cycle of continued stimulation of cancer development and growth," said Johan Thevelein, PhD, the study's coauthor. "Thus, it is able to explain the correlation between the strength of the Warburg effect and tumor aggressiveness. This link between sugar and cancer has sweeping consequences."

Scientists have yet to determine why cancer cells have such a reaction to sugar, but they believe this recent discovery will aid in learning whether low-sugar diets can help treat cancer. Future research will examine whether these results also apply to patients.

Click here to learn about the importance of a well-balanced diet for people with cancer.

© 2026 Smart + Strong All Rights Reserved.