Can Mouth Bacteria Cause Esophageal Cancer?

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Esophageal cancer occurs in the esophagus, a muscular tube that moves food from the mouth to the stomach and connects the throat to the stomach. Now, new study findings published in Cancer Research suggest that some types of mouth bacteria may increase or lower the risk of this cancer, reports Medical News Today.

For the assessment, researchers investigated the two main types of esophageal cancer: esophageal adenocarcinoma (EAC) and esophageal squamous cell carcinoma (ESCC). To examine mouth bacteria, oral wash samples were gathered from more than 122,000 people involved in two national studies. Researchers followed participants for 10 years and noted who developed esophageal cancer over time.

In addition, the genetic information of mouth bacteria of the participants who developed esophageal cancer was compared to that of equivalent participants who did not develop the disease.

Findings showed that Tannerella forsythia was linked to a higher risk of EAC and a heavy presence of Porphyromonas gingivalis was tied to a greater risk of ESCC. However, researchers also discovered that two types of bacteria, Streptococcus and Neisseria, were less likely to cause esophageal cancer.

Scientists noted that they ruled out the potential effects from smoking, alcohol and body mass index.

“Our study indicates that learning more about the role of oral microbiota may potentially lead to strategies to prevent esophageal cancer, or at least identify it at earlier stages,” said senior investigator Jiyoung Ahn, PhD, an associate professor and epidemiologist at New York University School of Medicine.

Click here to learn how light drinking can raise cancer risk.

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