U.N. Panel Says Sausage Is As Dangerous As Smoking

By ACSH Staff — October 26, 2015

The United Nations World Health Organization International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has determined [1] that processed meat, like sausage, is a Group 1 carcinogen - it is going to kill you - and that any red meat is Group 2A, "probably carcinogenic to humans."

For comparison, that means sausage is as bad for your health as asbestos, arsenic and cigarettes. Should you be worried? Not necessarily. IARC is in the business of linking things to cancer and the data show red meat was correlated to just 3 extra cases of bowel cancer per 100,000 people, so giving up meat doesn't mean you won't get bowel cancer or any other cancer - and eating sausage is not going to increase your real risk of adding any health problems.

There are, of course, lots of reasons not to eat too much red meat, just like there are lots of reasons not to be vegan or vegetarian or eat a diet of just ice cream, but the correlations in their meta-analysis are too simplistic to be meaningful.

Meat is not as dangerous as smoking, period, and an IARC claim won't change that reality.