




# Sugar makes cancerous tumours more aggressive, finds new study

 Sarah Young  
The Independent October 16, 2017



Scientists have found that sugar ‘awakens’ cancer cells and makes tumours more aggressive.

The findings of a nine-year research project conducted by VIB, KU Leuven and VUB are being hailed as a crucial breakthrough in cancer research as scientists finally clarify how the Warburg effect - a phenomenon in which cancer cells rapidly break down sugars - stimulates tumour growth.

Published in the academic journal Nature Communications, the project was started in 2008 with a focus on how tumours convert significantly higher amounts of sugar into lactate compared to healthy tissues.

While the phenomenon has been extensively studied, until now it has been unclear whether the effect is a symptom of cancer, or a cause.

But, this new research provides evidence for a positive correlation between sugar and oncogenic potency in cancerous cells.



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“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 professor Johan Thevelein.

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“Thus, it is able to explain the correlation between the strength of the Warburg effect and tumor aggressiveness.”

The researchers say that these findings will have “sweeping consequences” and provide a “foundation for future research in this domain” as well as having an impact on tailor-made diets for cancer patients.

In addition, yeast cell research was said to be essential to the discovery, as they contain the same 'Ras' proteins commonly found in tumour cells, which can cause cancer in mutated form.

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Using yeast as a model organism, the research team examined the connection between Ras activity and the highly active sugar metabolism in yeast.

“We observed in yeast that sugar degradation is linked via the intermediate fructose 1,6-bisphosphate to the activation of Ras

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It is striking that this mechanism has been conserved throughout the long evolution of yeast cell to human.”

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
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