

## Olive Oil and Colon Cancer Studies Show Basis for Prevention

Olive oil may offer protection against colon cancer, according to Spanish researchers working with rats. The animals that were fed diets rich in olive or fish oil experienced less cancer than their counterparts given safflower oil.

Scientists divided more than 100 rats into three equal groups, who received a diet high in either safflower oil, fish oil or olive oil. Then half of each group were given a cancer-inducing agent. Researchers evaluated tumor development, evidence of cancer precursors and fatty acid content at 12 and 19 weeks. Rats fed olive oil or fish oil had fewer polyps and other precancerous changes and fewer tumors than rats given safflower oil. Those on the olive or fish oil diets also had a significantly lower amount of a chemical involved in producing the inflammatory substance prostaglandin E, which has been shown to promote cancer during previous experiments.

Researchers said olive oil's components, such as squalene, flavonoids, and polyphenols, likely offer the cancer protection. They said it is unlikely that olive oil's primary ingredient, oleic acid, acts alone in generating the preventive effect, because it is found in foods which also contain oils and fats known to promote cancer. Beef, poultry and vegetable oils contain smaller amounts of oleic acid.

A German study reported in the journal **Carcinogenesis in December, 1999**, found monounsaturated fatty acids such as oleic acid to be protective. That study also determined that fish oil-derived omega-3 fatty acids seemed to prevent cancer cell proliferation. Earlier research has shown that dietary fat promotes cancer, but that it depends on the type and amount of fat.

Ann's NOTE: There is a theory that prevention and treatment issues are similar. After all those at most risk of developing cancer are those of us who have already had it.