Death by Bologna

New research has found a definite link between the amount of processed meat consumed and the risk of early death.

The European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition polled the eating, as well as lifestyle, habits of close to a half million Europeans. Past research had found a correlation between people who ate processed meat and people who lived a less healthy lifestyle with increased smoking and alcohol consumption and a diet with fewer fruits and vegetables. Because of this study's size, researchers were able to eliminate those variables that could contribute to early death and show that the processed meat alone was a cause.

What could make processed meats so deadly?

Carcinogens introduced by conventional preserving processes- salting, smoking, and pickling- get trapped inside the meat and are then consumed. These chemicals are not degraded by the body. In high concentrations, they can lead to cancer. (Preservative free meats do not contain these harmful chemicals.)

Saturated fats, associated with breast and colorectal cancer, are also found at high levels in processed meats. Along with cholesterol, saturated fats also lead directly to heart disease. So even meats that are processed without all of the nasty preservatives can be bad for your heath because they still contain high levels of fats, but they are a better option.

But that's just the meat itself. Plastic packaging has long been scrutinized for containing harmful chemicals. The Gustavus and Louise Pfeiffer Research Foundation sampled 72 common products, including processed meats. All of the products were contaminated by the plastic. The contaminant was

from a group of chemicals known as phthalates. Phthalates have been correlated to unnatural changes in the reproductive tracts of men and women, causing sperm damage, early breast development, and premature births.

So, eliminating processed meats from your diet is a sure way to stay healthier and live longer. Along the same line, so is decreasing the consumption of foods that spend the majority of their shelf life encased in plastic.

Not all meats are bad; small quantities of rmeat are good for you. But eliminating processed meats and other unhealthy habits, will give your life a boost.