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## Pasta DOESN'T make you fat - it actually helps weight loss, (Italian) researchers claim

- Pasta has become a dieter's enemy as carbs are now linked to weight gain
- Now scientists say it can help reduce BMI when part of Mediterranean diet
- Italian study looked at the diets of 23,000 people from two parts of Italy
- Researchers found those eating pasta had a 'better hip to waist ratio'

By ROSIE TAYLOR FOR THE DAILY MAIL and ANNA HODGEKISS FOR MAILONLINE

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It's been demonised nearly as much as bread and considered an enemy of many dieters the world over.

But the idea that eating pasta will make you fat is a myth - and quite the reverse is true, scientists claim.

For while it may be heavy on carbs, pasta may even help you slim, a new study has found.

That's because when eaten as part of a Mediterranean diet rich in vegetables and olive oil, pasta is linked with a slight reduction in Body Mass Index (BMI) and waistline size.

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**For while it may be heavy on carbs, pasta may even help you slim, a new study has found**

The study, by Italian scientists, analysed the diets of more than 23,000 people from two different areas in Italy.

They asked participants to record everything they ate in a diary and they were then quizzed about their diets by telephone interviewers.

The amount of pasta they consumed on a daily basis was standardised and compared to their BMI, waist and hip measurements.

Researchers concluded there was no link between eating pasta and gaining weight – it was actually linked to being slimmer.

Lead author of the paper, George Pounis said: 'By analyzing anthropometric data of the participants and their eating habits we have seen that consumption of pasta, contrary to what many think, is not associated with an increase in body weight, rather the opposite.'

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'Our data shows that enjoying pasta according to individuals' needs contributes to a healthy body mass index, lower waist circumference and better waist-hip ratio.'

Licia Iacoviello, of the Neuromed Institute in Pozzilli, Italy, which carried out the research, added: 'In popular views pasta is often considered not adequate when you want to lose weight. And some people completely ban it from their meals.'

'In light of this research, we can say that this is not a correct attitude. We're talking about a fundamental component of Italian Mediterranean tradition, and there is no reason to do without it.'

'The message emerging from this study... is that Mediterranean diet, consumed in moderation and respecting the variety of all its elements (pasta in the first place), is good to your health.'

The researchers found those who ate pasta regularly were also more likely to follow the traditional Mediterranean diet, eating mainly tomatoes, onions, garlic, olive oil, seasoned cheese and rice.

But they said the beneficial effect of eating pasta existed regardless of whether the diet was followed faithfully.

They did not suggest reasons why pasta could be linked to a lower BMI – but referenced the ongoing debate over whether carbohydrates are good or bad for health.

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Pasta has long been demonised as bad for the waistline but now Italian researchers say it is part of the Mediterranean diet and as such, contributed to a healthy BMI

Experts have been torn over whether a high fat, low carbohydrate diet is better for health or whether a low fat, high carbohydrate diet is best.

Dr Gunter Kuhnle, of the University of Reading, said the study showed it was 'wrong to demonise carbohydrates'.

He added: 'The data clearly show that consumption of a carbohydrate rich food such as pasta does not have to have an adverse effect on body weight. The results of this study confirm current dietary recommendations and support the recommendation for a balanced diet.'

But Dr Aseem Malhotra, advisor to the National Obesity Forum, argued the study was limited as it relied on telephone surveys.

But he said the quantity of pasta eaten was important, as those studied ate around 50g to 65g a day – much less than 'main meal' portions often eaten in the UK.

He added: 'Quantity is key. If you're eating lots of vegetables, olive oil and oily fish then having small amounts of pasta as traditional anti pasti (first course) is unlikely to be harmful or contribute to adverse health consequences and obesity.'

Dr Malhotra said it was still important for anyone with insulin resistance or Type 2 diabetes to reduce their starchy carbohydrate intake.

The disease, which is linked to obesity, affects more than 3 million Britons and is expected to affect 5 million by 2025 due to rising obesity levels.

The research was published in the journal Nutrition and Diabetes.

Dr. Aseem Malhotra explores Mediterranean diet secrets



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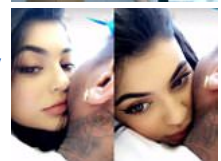
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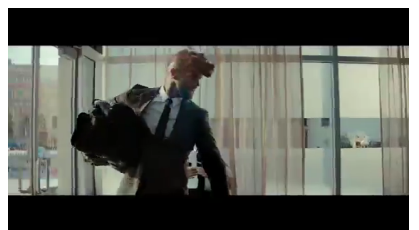
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