

# Vegetarian diet linked with lower risk of urinary tract infections

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A vegetarian diet may be associated with a lower risk of urinary tract infections (UTIs), a study in *Scientific Reports* suggests.

UTIs are usually caused by gut bacteria, such as *E. coli*, which enter the

[urinary tract](#) through the urethra and affect the kidneys and bladder. Previous research has shown that meat is a major reservoir for E. coli strains known to cause UTIs, but it is unknown whether avoiding meat reduces the risk of UTIs.

Chin-Lon Lin and colleagues assessed the incidence of UTIs in 9,724 Buddhists in Taiwan, who participated in the Tzu Chi Vegetarian Study, a study investigating the role of a [vegetarian diet](#) on [health outcomes](#) in Taiwanese Buddhists. The authors found that the overall risk of UTIs was 16% lower in vegetarians than in non-vegetarians. Of the 3,040 vegetarians in the study, 217 developed a UTI compared to 444 UTI cases in 6,684 non-vegetarians studied. The reduced UTI risk associated with a vegetarian [diet](#) was greater in men than women, although overall UTI risk for men was 79% lower than for women, regardless of diet.

The authors suggest that by not eating common sources of E. coli, such as poultry and pork, vegetarians may avoid ingesting E. coli that may cause UTIs. They also propose that the higher fibre diet of many vegetarians may prevent the growth of E. coli in the gut and decrease UTI risk by making the intestine more acidic.

**More information:** Yen-Chang Chen et al, The risk of urinary tract infection in vegetarians and non-vegetarians: a prospective study, *Scientific Reports* (2020). [DOI: 10.1038/s41598-020-58006-6](https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-020-58006-6)

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