

SAT Reading Passage and Test Questions

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The World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has compiled a list of items and activities that the agency has deemed as having the potential to cause cancer. Though many items in the more dangerous classifications are not regularly encountered by the average human, such as radioiodines, which are released during atomic reactor accidents, many of them are. Tobacco, air pollution, and sunlamps, for example, fall into the “Definitely Carcinogenic” classification, and many people do what they can to avoid them. It is alarming, then, when the IARC adds a new, familiar item to the list. Such is the case recently when the IARC announced that red meat and processed meat are the latest additions to its catalog of carcinogens.

It is no surprise that people are frightened by this new addition; most people in the United States eat meat. In a Gallup poll conducted in 2012, only 5 percent of Americans considered themselves vegetarians. That leaves a whopping 94 percent of citizens who consume meat products. The majority (55 percent) of their meat intake falls into the “red meat” category, which includes beef, pork, lamb, veal, and mutton. And processed meat—products such as hot dogs, bacon, and deli meat that have been transformed through salting, curing, or other processes to improve flavor and preservation—is prevalent as well, accounting for one quarter of Americans’ meat consumption. That’s a tremendous amount of cancer risk being consumed every day. But why, exactly, have red and processed meat fallen victim to the IARC’s carcinogen list?

According to the IARC’s recent evaluation of over 800 studies on cancer in humans, there is evidence to link the consumption of red and processed meat and the development of colorectal, pancreatic, and prostate cancer, so the organization has classified these products as carcinogenic to humans. The drawbacks of eating these types of meat products have been long-known by scientists and consumers alike (they are also linked with diabetes and cardiovascular disease), but will this new classification alarm Americans so much that they will change their relationship with a food product they love?

Perhaps so, but the change does not have to be so drastic, and the fear not so acute. Yes, red and processed meat carry risks, but the risks are not as terrifying as some reports make them out to be. For example, one article that reported the new classification stated in its headline, “Processed Meat as Dangerous as Tobacco.” Another claimed, “Bacon

Causes Cancer.” A closer look at these headlines reveals a more nuanced take on a seemingly alarming situation. Take the tobacco headline. It is true that processed meat has been lumped into the same carcinogenic classification as tobacco, so in a categorical-sense it is “as dangerous as tobacco.” But a look at the data reveals that the two are hardly comparable. Cancer Research UK has determined that of the 44,488 cases of lung cancer diagnosed in the UK in 2012, 86 percent of them were caused by tobacco, while of the 41,600 cases of bowel cancer diagnosed in the UK in 2011, only 21 percent were caused by processed and red meat. Clearly, the two substances are not on an even playing field, so to speak, and while evidence may exist that both substances are linked to cancer, tobacco is far more likely to cause it. And the bacon headline is purely extremist. This statement is an over-stretching of the conclusions. First of all, many things cause cancer; just look at the IARC’s carcinogen list, which lists over 440 carcinogenic substances. Second, the research doesn’t prove that bacon causes cancer; it suggests that bacon is associated with cancer.

This information is not to say that we should feel no threat to our health while continuing to consume red and processed meat. Rather, it is to suggest that the reactionary response to cut these products from our diets may not be necessary. After all, red meat is a good source of protein, iron, vitamin B-12, and zinc. Professor Tim Key, an epidemiologist for Cancer Research UK says of the IARC’s new classifications, “This decision doesn’t mean you need to stop eating any red and processed meat. But if you eat lots of it you may want to think about cutting down.”

Figure 1

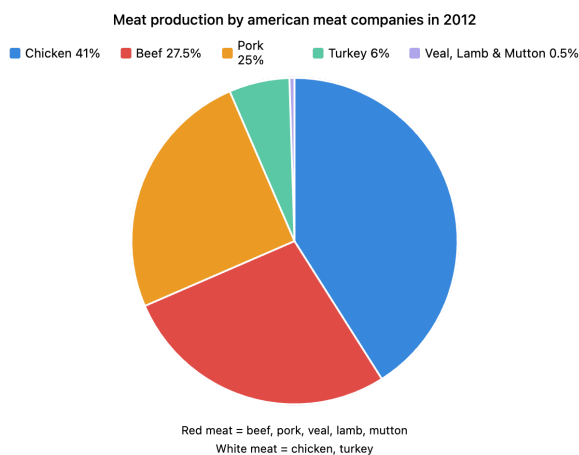
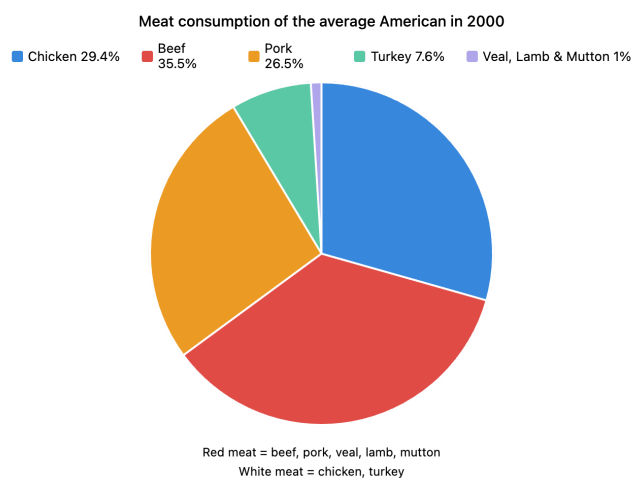


Figure 2



QUESTION 1

What function does the second paragraph (lines XX-XX) serve in the passage as a whole?

- A. It illustrates the prevalence of a practice that has come into question.
- B. It acknowledges the limitations of a behavior favored by the author of the passage.
- C. It advocates for abandoning a behavior for which the passage as a whole provides mostly favorable data.
- D. It gives an overview of a dangerous situation that consumers need to be aware of.

ANSWER: A

QUESTION 2

Which choice does the author explicitly cite as a benefit of consuming red meat?

- A. Disease prevention
- B. Convenience
- C. Affordability
- D. Nutritional content

ANSWER: D

QUESTION 3

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

- A. Lines XX-XX (“Second . . . cancer”)
- B. Lines XX-XX (This information . . . meat”)
- C. Lines XX-XX (“After all . . . zinc”)
- D. Lines XX-XX (“Professor . . . down”)

ANSWER: C

QUESTION 4

The central idea of the fourth paragraph (lines XX-XX) is that

- A. Americans should continue to eat red and processed meat because the claims that they are linked to cancer are invalid.
- B. red and processed meat consumption is not as dangerous as media headlines would have people believe.
- C. lung cancer, which is the most dangerous form of cancer, is caused

by tobacco, not meat products.

D. people should accept the media reports about the carcinogenic qualities of red and processed meat at face value.

ANSWER: B

QUESTION 5

Which choice provides the best evidence for the answer to the previous question?

A. Lines XX-XX (“Perhaps . . . acute”)

B. Lines XX-XX (“Yes . . . be”)

C. Lines XX-XX (“For example . . . Tobacco”)

D. Lines XX-XX (“But . . . comparable”)

ANSWER: B

REFERENCES: A. paragraph 4, sentence 1; B. paragraph 4, sentence 2;

C. paragraph 4, sentence 3; D. paragraph 4, sentence 8

QUESTION 6

As used in line XX, “consumed” most nearly means

A. obsessed.

B. annihilated.

C. ingested.

D. dominated.

ANSWER: C

QUESTION 7

As used in line XX, “lumped” most nearly means

A. bulged.

B. grouped.

C. trudged.

D. endured.

ANSWER: B

QUESTION 8

Which choice best supports the conclusion that, in terms of cancer risk, tobacco use is more dangerous than red and processed meat consumption?

- A. Lines XX-XX (“A closer . . . situation”)
- B. Lines XX-XX (“It is . . . tobacco”)
- C. Lines XX-XX (“Cancer . . . meat”)
- D. Lines XX-XX (“This statement . . . substances”)

ANSWER: D

REFERENCES: A. paragraph 4, sentence 5; B. paragraph 4, sentence 7;
C. paragraph 4, sentence 9; D. paragraph 4, sentence 12

QUESTION 9

Which choice is supported by the data in the first figure?

- A. The amount of beef produced is greater than the total amount of chicken and turkey combined.
- B. American meat companies produce more turkey than any other meat product.
- C. No other meat product is produced in smaller quantities than veal, lamb, and mutton.
- D. Of all the red-meat products, pork is the most produced by American meat companies.

ANSWER: C

QUESTION 10

Taken together, the two figures suggest that, in America, red meat is

- A. more popular than white meat, in terms of consumption and production.
- B. produced in lower quantities than white meat because Americans eat less red meat.
- C. preferred by consumers because it is more affordable to produce than white meat.
- D. produced and consumed in higher quantities because it is more nutritious than white meat.

ANSWER: A