

Would you like frankenfries with that?

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A UK study of human volunteers fed a hamburger with genetically modified soya and a milkshake has found GM genes in human gut bacteria. But more surprising than the research itself, is the fact that this is the FIRST human trial on the effects of GM foods on our bodies.

We've known for years that a meal of hamburgers and a milkshake isn't good for us, but now there is new cause for concern.

A study by Newcastle university for the UK Food Standards Agency revealed genetically modified (GM) genes are showing up in human stomach bacteria. The researchers fed seven volunteers who have had their lower intestines removed a hamburger with GM soya and a milkshake. The stools tested from the volunteers' colostomy bags showed that a 'relatively large portion of the genetically modified DNA survived the passage through the small bowel.'

More astonishing, this is the world's first trial of GM foods on human volunteers.

"I'm sorry, did you say world's **first** human study of the effects of GM food on our bodies."

Yes, that's right. We have been eating genetically modified organisms in our foods for years now and this is the first time that the effects have been studied on real live human beings. At least for which the results have been published.

Yet all along, biotechnology companies have been telling consumers – "it's safe, it's good for you" – assuming that the genetically engineered genes would be digested and disappear like asteroids burning up on entry into the atmosphere.

The study went further to see if this genetically modified DNA could be transferred via bacteria in the large intestine. In laboratory simulated gastrointestinal tracts, three of the seven samples revealed bacteria had taken on the herbicide-resistant gene. **And this was after only one GM meal.** There have been no studies of the long term effects of introducing GM food into people's diets.

This study clearly demonstrates that we can get genetically modified DNA in our stomach bacteria, something the bio-tech companies used to deny was possible.

This research raises some pretty serious health concerns.

For years environmental and consumer groups have been questioning the safety of bio-tech companies using antibiotic-resistant marker genes to identify the GM cells during development.

Some scientists believe that eating GM food containing these marker genes could encourage gut bacteria or oral bacteria to develop antibiotic resistance. This new research suggests that this could very well happen, even at very low levels after just one meal.

The only thing we can surely conclude from this study is we still don't know enough about the effects of GM foods on humans or the environment. The companies making millions off this technology have taken the attitude it is safe until it is proven unsafe, but we must insist on a new global policy – better safe than sorry