

Diet and Exercise Improve Cancer Survival Rates

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In general, studies associate healthy lifestyles with a lower risk of developing cancer. Now, recent findings presented at the 2017 American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Annual Meeting suggest that a healthy diet and specific amounts of regular exercise can also increase survival rates for patients with colon and breast cancer, reports [The Guardian](#).

One study conducted by researchers at the University of California, San Francisco examined 1,000 colon cancer patients to determine whether American Cancer Society nutritional and exercise guidelines for cancer survivors affected survival among this particular group of patients. (The guidelines recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate exercise each week, maintenance of a healthy weight and a dietary regimen that includes fruits, vegetables and whole grains.) Scientists discovered that patients who engaged in regular exercise and consumed fruits and vegetables while avoiding refined grains and meats had a 42 percent lower chance of death after seven years.

In another study at Queensland University of Technology in Australia, researchers studied more than 300 Australians with breast cancer whose goal was to exercise 180 minutes each week. (Most walked.) During the eight-month program, scientists divided participants into two groups: those who received exercise counseling and those who did not, who served as a control group. The participants were six weeks out of surgery and lived in rural and urban locations.

Results showed that patients who exercised enjoyed a more significant chance of survival compared with their inactive counterparts. During a follow-up of about eight years, researchers noted that 5.3 percent of the women who received exercise counseling died compared with 11.5 percent of those who weren't advised. Additionally, cancer recurred in 12.1 percent of those who were counseled versus 17.7 percent who weren't.

"Most of what we know about the importance of exercise post-cancer comes from studying women with breast cancer," said Sandra Hayes, PhD, an epidemiologist studying cancer and exercise at the university and one of the study's authors. "Engaging in some activity [or] exercise is better than none, and doing more is generally better than less."

While the conclusions of the studies were promising, scientists said how physical activity influences cancer survival is still "unclear." In addition, researchers still haven't established causal links between exercise and cancer recurrence.

In the meantime, survivors of different types of cancers can follow the American Cancer Society's detailed guidelines about nutrition and exercise. The report addresses a variety of issues, including physical activity during and after cancer treatment, how to locate specialized nutrition counseling and recommendations for those who suffer from a lack of appetite.

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