

Cancer survivors who practice healthy habits have higher quality of life

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A new study from the American Cancer Society finds cancer survivors who follow health behavior recommendations – avoiding tobacco, eating more fruits and vegetables, and getting adequate exercise—have higher health-related quality of life (HRQoL) scores than those who do not follow such recommendations. The study, which appears in the May issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, also finds cancer survivors have low rates of smoking, but few are meeting physical activity recommendations or meeting the “5-A-Day” fruit and vegetable consumption recommendation, suggesting a cancer diagnosis may change smoking behavior but have little impact on exercise and healthy eating.

Researchers led by Kevin Stein, PhD, used data from more than 9,000 survivors participating in the American Cancer Society’s Study of Cancer Survivors-II (SCS II), a national cross-sectional study of HRQoL among cancer survivors identified through population-based cancer registries.

The analysis revealed that eight out of ten survivors were not meeting the 5-A-Day recommendation (range 80.0 to 85.2 percent). Up to seven out of ten were not meeting recommendations for physical activity (range 52.7 percent to 70.4 percent). Meanwhile, survivors were more likely to be non-smokers than those without a history of cancer (range 82.6 to 91.6 percent). Only about one in 20 survivors was meeting all three lifestyle behavior recommendations (range 3.6 to 5.8 percent).

The study also found higher HRQoL in survivors who were meeting each lifestyle behavior recommendation, with the strongest associations emerging for physical activity. And the more lifestyle behaviors cancer survivors met, the higher their HRQoL score, regardless of the type of cancer.

“It is concerning that up to 12.5 percent of cancer survivors are not meeting any lifestyle behavior recommendation and less than 10 percent on average across the cancer groups are meeting two or more recommendations,” said Dr. Stein.

“What is particularly noteworthy is that following lifestyle behavior recommendations not only can have a positive impact on physical health outcomes, but also have the added benefit of having a positive impact on quality of life. We also found that the relationship between compliance with recommendations and quality of life is cumulative. That is, that the more recommended health behaviors survivors engage in (e.g. eating better, being active, not smoking), the more powerful the impact on their quality of life.”

Source: American Cancer Society

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