

Unhealthy behaviors more prevalent in survivors of multiple cancers, study shows

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A study published by University of Kentucky researchers shows that survivors of multiple cancers report unhealthier behaviors post-diagnosis than control counterparts.

Published in the [Annals of Behavioral Medicine](#), the study recorded answers regarding health status and health behaviors from 404,525 adults using the [Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System](#) survey. Participants who said they had never received a diagnosis of cancer from a health professional were considered controls, while those who answered "yes" were considered [cancer survivors](#). Those who had received two or more cancer diagnoses were considered a survivor of multiple cancers.

The study showed that survivors of multiple cancers reported a poorer physical and mental health status compared to survivors of a single cancer, who in turn reported a poorer overall health status relative to the control group.

Survivors of multiple cancers showed a greater likelihood of cigarette smoking or smokeless tobacco use, greater alcohol consumption when drinking, and less moderate and [vigorous physical activity](#).

Researchers suggest that the prolonged, heightened stress of multiple cancer diagnoses may increase a patient's "allostatic load," the natural wear and tear that occurs in the body due to experiencing stress. This data indicates that patients who have survived multiple cancers need

clinical interventions to enhance both physical and mental health status and to help patients adopt healthier behaviors.

"Future research will need to determine the precise mechanisms that underlie the results found in this research," said researcher Jessica L. Burris, a clinical psychology doctoral candidate at UK. "Once the mechanisms of action have been identified, such as physiological system dysregulation or risk reduction beliefs, targeted interventions can be developed and tested for the burgeoning group of survivors of multiple cancers."

Provided by University of Kentucky

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