

Cancer survivors need more support to stop smoking and drinking

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Cancer survivors are no more likely to stop smoking, cut down on alcohol, or exercise more often than the general population, according to new research published in the *British Journal of Cancer* today (Wednesday)

The Cancer Research UK funded study is the first large-scale study in the UK to track smoking, alcohol and physical activity, which have all been shown to increase chances of survival, from before to after a cancer diagnosis.

By comparing people who received a cancer diagnosis with those who remained cancer free over a four year period, the researchers found that [cancer survivors](#) were less active overall and led a more [sedentary lifestyle](#).

[Alcohol consumption](#) and smoking decreased over time in both groups – but a cancer diagnosis did not give any extra motivation.

Cancer survival rates have doubled in the last 40 years and there are now more than two million people alive in the UK who are living with or have previously had cancer – a number set to climb in the coming decades.

We also know that many cancers are related to [lifestyle factors](#), such as tobacco (linked to 19.4 per cent of cancer in the UK), alcohol (4.0 per cent) and obesity (5.5 per cent). Given that a healthy lifestyle can reduce

the risk of recurrence and improve long-term survival, more should be done to help cancer survivors make the healthy changes necessary.

Professor Jane Wardle, lead author of the study and director of Cancer Research UK's [Health Behaviour](#) Research Centre at University College London, said: "Anecdotally, we often hear that a cancer diagnosis is a "wake-up call", but the results from our large study show that this is not the general rule. People who received a [cancer diagnosis](#) during the time we were studying them were no more likely to quit smoking, drink less or become more active than those who remained cancer-free."

Sara Hiom, Cancer Research UK's director of information, said: "More needs to be done to encourage cancer survivors to take a look at their lifestyle choices and support them in making improvements that could increase their chances of survival and sense of wellbeing. Patients and health professionals could be made more aware of the information and evidence on these issues and supported in how to make manageable changes after diagnosis and treatment."

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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