

Study Shows Active Older Adults Have Better Physical and Mental Health

Older adults with higher physical activity and lower sitting time have better overall physical and mental health, according to a new study from the American Cancer Society (ACS). The study, appearing in the journal, *CANCER*, suggests that higher amounts of regular moderate- to vigorous-intensity physical activity (MVPA) and lower duration of sedentary time is associated with higher global mental and physical health for older cancer survivors and older adults, in general.

With a rapidly aging population and nearly 16.9 million cancer survivors in the United States today, there is a need to identify strategies associated with healthy aging and improving quality of life for aging cancer survivors. Being physically active is related to several health benefits, and in this study, ACS investigators led by Dr. Erika Rees-Punia analyzed self-reported aerobic and muscle-strengthening physical activities, sitting time, and mental and physical health among nearly 78,000 participants in the ACS's Cancer Prevention Study II Nutrition Cohort. Participants (average age 78 years) included older cancer survivors up to 10 years post-diagnosis, and cancer-free adults.

The investigators found that regardless of cancer history, the differences in global mental and physical health between the most and least active, and the least and most sedentary, were clinically meaningful. These findings provide evidence for the importance of engaging in regular MVPA and decreasing sitting time as a reasonable non-pharmacologic strategy to improve quality of life in older men and women, with or without a prior cancer diagnosis. In fact, the recently published ACS physical activity guidelines recommend that adults get 150-300 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or 75-150 minutes of vigorous-intensity activity through the week, and to limit sedentary behaviors such as screen-based entertainment.

"The findings reinforce the importance of moving more and sitting less for both physical and mental health, no matter your age or history of cancer," said Rees-Punia. "This is especially relevant now as so many of us, particularly cancer survivors, may be staying home to avoid COVID-19 exposure, and may be feeling a little isolated or down. A simple walk or other physical activity that you enjoy may be good for your mind and body."

Article: Rees-Punia E, Patel AV, Nocera JR, Chantaprasopsuk S, Demark-Wahnefried W, Leach CR, Smith TG, Cella D, Gapstur SM. Self-Reported Physical Activity, Sitting Time, and Mental and Physical Health Among Older Cancer Survivors Compared to Adults Without a History of Cancer, 2020. *CANCER*; DOI: 10.1002/cncr.33257.

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