Sit Less, Move More

Sitting more than eight hours a day more than doubled the risk for cancer-related death compared with sitting less than four hours a day.

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Cancer survivors who sat for extended periods and engaged in little or no leisure-time physical activity had a fivefold higher risk for death from cancer and other causes, according to study results published in JAMA Oncology.

Chao Cao, MPH, of the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, and colleagues studied 1,535 cancer survivors who were at least 40 years old; they were followed for an average of 4.5 years. The mean age was 65, 60% were women and 83% were white. Most had overweight (35%) or obesity (38%).

More than half (57%) reported zero minutes of leisure time physical activity per week; another 16% reported less than the recommended 150 minutes per week. Only 28% reported 150 minutes or more per week. In addition, 35% reported sitting for six to eight hours every day, and 25% spent more than eight hours sitting every day. More than a third (36%) sat for at least six hours a day and had no leisure physical activity.

People who got adequate physical activity had a 66% lower risk for death from all causes and a 68% lower risk for death from cancer compared with those who got little or no such physical activity. Sitting more than eight hours a day more than doubled the risk for cancer-related death compared with sitting less than four hours a day. Not surprisingly, combining inactivity and long hours sitting was the worst: Little or no leisure time activity plus sitting eight or more hours a day was linked with a 4.7-fold increase in cancer-related mortality.

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