

Title: Physical activity and dietary behaviors of prostate cancer survivors post prostatectomy.

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Introduction:

About one man in six will be diagnosed with prostate cancer during his lifetime. This high incidence of prostate cancer, coupled with a survival rate approaching 100%, affords an attractive target for lifestyle interventions. Recent studies indicate that obesity adversely affects long-term outcomes for prostate cancer including impotency, urinary incontinence and risk of recurrence. The time of cancer diagnosis has been identified as a “teachable moment” when many survivors are searching for nutrition information. An important step in promoting healthy lifestyle behaviors is determining if cancer survivors are following a healthy diet and participating in exercise.

Methods and Analysis:

Approximately 1200 patients from a prostate cancer survivorship program were mailed a survey packet: a 17-item diet history questionnaire from the National Cancer Institute National Health Interview Survey, the 3-item Godin Physical Activity Questionnaire, and space for the patient to enter height and weight. The surveys were mailed out with a letter of introduction and a return self-addressed stamped envelope. Due to the purported health benefits of green tea, a green teabag was included in the package as incentive to participate.

Findings and Implications:

The survey garnered a response rate of 70% (n=836). According to patient self report 28% of the sample was of normal weight, 55% overweight and 17% obese. Mean age at the time of the prostatectomy was 58.4 years (sd = 6.9), and the mean survival time at the time of the survey was 55.1 months (sd = 3.4). Statistically significant ($p < 0.05$) negative Pearson correlations with body mass index (BMI) included eating fruits, vegetables and whole grain bread. Positive correlations with BMI included eating French fries, bacon, and potato chips. Additionally, only strenuous exercise, as compared to mild or moderate exercise, had a significant negative correlation with BMI. The findings from this survey reinforce the role a high fat diet makes to overweight and obesity as well as the importance of physical activity in controlling weight.

Conclusions:

As seen by the high response rate, men with prostate cancer in this sample have an interest in making lifestyle changes. However, in today’s “super-size me” society, making these changes can often be quite difficult. As strong evidence indicates, weight management is a protective factor in prostate cancer and is beneficial in preventing co-morbidities, such as cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Clinicians must explore tools to help their patients achieve a healthy lifestyle. Future research will investigate the use of new “smart phone” applications to assist in controlling weight, monitoring diet, and optimizing physical activity.