

Cod liver oil and lung cancer

A study in Norway assessed diet and supplement use prior to cancer diagnosis in over 4000 women with cancer. Researchers found that patients with solid tumors (like breast, colon, lung but not blood cancers) who had used cod liver oil supplements daily for at least a year had a risk of death that was 33% less than those who used cod liver oil less often [relative risk (RR) = 0.77]. For lung cancer patients, the reduction in mortality was 44% (RR = 0.56). Daily use of other supplements also reduced risk of death in lung cancer patients (RR=0.70). Interestingly, occasional use of supplements was also associated with a decreased mortality similar to daily use of cod liver oil, again only for lung cancer patients (RR=0.55). Researchers accounted for other variables in drawing these conclusions, including factors like stage of cancer, weight and smoking. Cod liver oil has two important qualities that could contribute to lung cancer survival – omega-3 fatty acids and vitamin D. On the other hand, the fact that occasional use of supplements also seemed to reduce mortality suggests that an overall health-conscious lifestyle may also be important in helping patients survive lung cancer.

Skeie G, Braaten T, Hjartåker A, Brustad M, Lund E. Cod liver oil, other dietary supplements and survival among cancer patients with solid tumours. *Int J Cancer*. 2009 Sep 1;125(5):1155-60.

To summarize: Norwegian lung cancer patients who supplemented every day with cod liver oil before their cancer were more likely to survive. Even occasional supplement users survived better, suggesting that part of this effect was due to an overall healthy lifestyle.