Cancer Cutters?

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Along with other healthy habits, keeping your CD4 count high might help protect against cancer. Reviewing records of 52,278 HIV-positive people from 1998 to 2006, French researchers concluded that those with CD4 counts of 500 or more were less likely to develop any of the seven cancers most common among people with HIV. Those seven, in order of frequency:

- Kaposi’s sarcoma
- Non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma (NHL)
- Lung cancer
- Hodgkin’s lymphoma
- Liver cancer
- Anal cancer
- Cervical cancer

For anal cancer, higher risk was linked to two things: having had HIV for many years and having had, at some point, a CD4 count under 200 (and viral load above 100,000) for two years or more. For the other cancers, current CD4 count seemed to make the difference. The researchers recommended screening HIV-positive people for these cancers—especially if CD4 counts are low. This research may further support arguments for raising the CD4 level at which HIV treatment should begin from the current recommendation of 350 to 500.

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