Cancer Concerns

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A large study has found higher rates of numerous cancers among people living with HIV, compared with the HIV-negative population. To come to this conclusion, researchers followed over 85,000 HIV-positive and nearly 200,000 HIV-negative individuals between 1996 and 2009.

The proportion of the respective HIV-positive and HIV-negative populations who developed various cancers by age 75 included: Kaposi's sarcoma, 4.4 percent and 0.01 percent; non-Hodgkin lymphoma, 4.5 percent and 0.7 percent; lung cancer, 3.4 percent and 2.8 percent; anal cancer, 1.5 percent and 0.05 percent; colorectal cancer, 1.0 percent and 1.5 percent; liver cancer, 1.1 percent and 0.4 percent; Hodgkin lymphoma, 0.9 percent and 0.09 percent; and melanoma, 0.5 percent and 0.6 percent.
The study's co-lead author, Michael J. Silverberg, PhD, MPH, an investigator with the Kaiser Permanente Division of Research in Oakland, California, says that the good news is that increased rates of certain cancers in the HIV population, including anal, colorectal and liver cancers, only occurred because people with HIV are living longer. "In addition," he says, "the rates of other cancers didn't change over time, such as lung cancer, Hodgkin lymphoma and melanoma."

Starting HIV treatment soon after diagnosis and avoiding smoking, Silverberg advises, can help reduce HIV-positive people's overall risk of cancer.

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