

Phone Calls, Cabbage, and Kale Evaluated in Bladder Cancer Study

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Could phone conversation be a new line of defense against cancer? A new clinical trial study at UC San Diego Medical Center is evaluating whether or not diet intervention, prompted by phone calls, may be an effective way of treating bladder cancer.

"There is good evidence to suggest that dietary counseling can be beneficial in weight loss, smoking cessation, and breast and prostate cancer prevention," said Kellogg Parsons, MD, urologic oncologist at UC San Diego Medical Center and Moores UCSD Cancer Center. "We are now applying this concept to treating bladder cancer."

Funded by the National Institutes of Health, this pilot study called The Dietary Intervention for Bladder Cancer Study (DIBS) is open to men and women over the age of 50 who have been diagnosed with bladder cancer. During the six-month study, trial participants will receive either phone-based dietary counseling or informative print materials to guide their nutritional decisions. Phone call participants will receive advice tailored to their lifestyle at a time that is convenient for them. Spouses or loved ones may be involved in the process if desired.

"The diet counselor will check in with the patient to see how many vegetables they are eating, particularly cruciferous vegetables such as broccoli and kale," said Parsons. "Tips on how to shop for vegetables, flavorful recipes, and cooking advice will also be shared along with a good dose of encouragement."

Cruciferous vegetables are high in vitamin C and fiber and also contain multiple nutrients with potent anti-cancer properties such as diindolylmethane, sulforaphane and selenium. Examples of cruciferous vegetables include bok choy, collard greens, cabbage, and Brussels sprouts. In patients with early stage bladder cancer, these vegetables have been found to prevent the recurrence and spread of the disease.

As part of the study, two blood and urine samples are taken to determine if the participant has increased their intake of cruciferous vegetables.

Most bladder cancers tend to be diagnosed early and in more than 80 percent of newly identified cases, the cancer has not invaded the surrounding tissue. The most telling sign of bladder cancer is blood visible in the urine or detected in microscopic amounts during a routine visit to the doctor's office.

According to the National Cancer Institute, most bladder cancers are transitional cell carcinomas, a cancer that begins in cells in the inner lining of the bladder. Other types include squamous cell carcinoma and adenocarcinoma which develop in the inner lining of the bladder as a result of chronic irritation and inflammation. In 2008, there were approximately 68,800 new cases of bladder cancer in the United States.

For more information on the DIBS study, please call (858) 822-6790.

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