Can Multivitamins Reduce the Likelihood of Chemo-Induced Neuropathy?

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Nearly 30 to 40 percent of patients who undergo treatment for cancer develop chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN), a condition caused by damage to the nerves outside the brain and spinal cord that can disrupt daily function and quality of life. But new findings published in the Journal of the National Center Institute suggest that taking multivitamins may help reduce CIPN, reports Healio.

Researchers at Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in Buffalo, New York, recruited 1,225 patients with breast cancer for an observational study. Participants completed questionnaires that assessed use of multivitamins and supplements at baseline and six months into treatment with the drug paclitaxel. Questionnaires asked about several lifestyle factors, including dietary supplement use and whether patients experienced neuropathy.

Patients who used multivitamins before diagnosis and, to a lesser extent, during treatment experienced less CIPN compared with those who didn't use the supplements. In addition, researchers found an inverse association between multivitamin use during treatment and the likelihood of developing CIPN.

"Symptoms of chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy often persist after completion of chemotherapy and effective treatment options are limited," said Gary Zirpoli, PhD, a graduate of Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center's doctoral program in cancer prevention and now a research fellow at the department of neurology at Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School. "Identifying preventive measures is, therefore, a critical part of enhancing quality of life for breast cancer survivors."

Researchers say further research is needed before any practice-changing recommendations can be made. Patients should consult with their physicians before making drastic modifications to their supplementation routine during chemotherapy.

Click here to learn how cryotherapy may reduce symptoms of peripheral neuropathy in women with breast cancer.

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