

High Cholesterol Meds May Help Alleviate Chemo Brain During Treatment

Statins to treat high cholesterol may reduce cognitive issues in people with breast cancer and lymphoma undergoing chemotherapy.

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People with breast cancer and lymphoma who experience cognitive side effects associated with cancer treatment may be able to alleviate their symptoms by taking [statins](#), which are common meds used to treat high cholesterol, according to new research [from the Virginia Commonwealth University \(VCU\) Health Pauley Heart Center](#).

Many people who undergo [chemotherapy](#) experience slowed thinking, impaired concentration and memory lapses, commonly known as [brain fog](#) or chemo brain. Cognitive impairment may result from the drugs themselves or associated side effects, such as fatigue, emotional stress and poor sleep. Numerous remedies have been proposed for managing chemo brain, including [efforts to stimulate and exercise](#) the brain.

In the new study, published in the [Journal of the American Medical Association Network Open](#), VCU researchers found that people who received statins before, during and up to 24 hours after treatment experienced an improvement in their brain function.

Previous research has shown an association between higher doses of statins and reversible cognitive decline in older adults. Other research has [indicated that cannabis products](#) may ease chemo brain in people with cancer.

The current study aimed to go deeper by testing how chemotherapy and statins would interact and impact both cardiac and cognitive function in participants undergoing treatment for either [breast cancer](#) or [lymphoma](#), a type of blood cancer that attacks the lymphatic system.

Using previously collected data from the PREVENT trial, researchers monitored heart function in participants by both cardiac MRI and biomarker testing and administered cognitive assessments.

“Our results suggest that cancer patients who participated in our statin group may have shown some unexpected cognitive benefit while undergoing chemotherapy and for two years after treatment. Protecting the mind is just as important as protecting the heart during cancer treatment,” said lead study author Pamela Jill Grizzard, MS, assistant director of research compliance and regulatory affairs at Pauley Heart Center, in a VCU Health news update.

While Grizzard encourages additional studies to determine whether statins can preserve brain function during and after treatment for other types of cancer, she calls this study a promising step toward preserving the cognitive function of cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy.

“Cancer treatment can be debilitating, and cognitive decline arising from chemotherapy treatment can sometimes last long after treatment concludes,” Grizzard said. “My hope is that this research contributes in some small way to any larger efforts to offer therapeutic relief to cancer patients who encounter difficulties with executive function following cancer treatment. If future studies confirm a beneficial effect, statins could become a valuable tool in helping cancer survivors maintain cognitive function and quality of life throughout treatment.”

To read more, click [#Brain Fog](#), [#Chemo Brain](#) and [#Statins](#). There, you’ll see headlines such as “[Maybe It’s Not Just Aging. Maybe It’s Anemia](#),” “[Cannabis Improves Cognition in Cancer Patients](#)” and “[Many People Regain Cognitive Function After Radiation for Brain Metastasis](#).”