

New research shows that supplementation of omega-3 fatty acids (EPA and DHA) during active cancer treatment may positively improve quality of life in patients with stage III non-small cell lung cancer.

Omega-3 fatty acids improve quality of life score in lung cancer patients during treatment

Poor nutritional status during cancer therapy may lead to malnutrition, decreased quality of life and an increase in complications. In a recent study published in the *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, researchers investigated the potential benefit of an oral dietary supplement containing omega-3 fatty acids in patients with non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) undergoing multiple treatments.

The study was a randomized double-blind controlled trial that included 40 patients with stage III NSCLC undergoing multimodality treatment. The treatment group received 2 cans/day of a high calorie protein supplement containing omega-3 fatty acids (2.02 grams EPA + 0.92 grams DHA) and the placebo group received a control supplement containing the same calories but no fatty acids. Quality of life, performance status, handgrip strength and physical activity were assessed.

The treatment group reported significantly higher on the quality of life issues, physical and cognitive function, overall health status, and social function than the control group after 5 weeks. The supplement group also showed a higher Karnofsky Performance Status after 3 weeks and tended to be more physically active after 3 and 5 weeks than the controls. There was no significant difference in the measurement of handgrip strength between the two groups.

The results of this small study indicate that supplementing with omega-3 fatty acids may positively affect the quality of life, performance status, and physical activity in patients with NSCLC being actively treated for cancer. A larger study is needed to further verify these results.

B S van der Meij et al. Oral nutritional supplements containing n-3 polyunsaturated fatty acids affect quality of life and functional status in lung cancer patients during multimodality treatment: an RCT. *European Journal of Clinical Nutrition* (2012) 66, 399–404.