

What Is The Truth About Resveratrol & Cancer?

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What is the truth about resveratrol and cancer?

Some experts claim that resveratrol binds to estrogen receptors and it might increase the risk of breast cancer.

Other experts say that resveratrol is an antioxidant and should not be taken during radiation treatment or chemotherapy.

Both are logical statements - but are they true?

The answer is that nobody really knows. And a couple of recent studies suggest that they may not be true.

Let's look at breast cancer first. About 2/3 of breast cancers are what is called estrogen responsive, which means that their growth is stimulated by estrogen – a naturally occurring female hormone.

Dr. Eleanor G. Rogan, a professor in the Eppley Institute for Research in Cancer and Allied Diseases at the University of Nebraska Medical Center conducted a study with breast cancer cells that was reported in the July 2008 issue of Cancer Prevention Research.

Her studies showed that, contrary to what others had hypothesized, resveratrol actually inhibited the growth of estrogen-responsive breast cancer cells by inducing an enzyme called quinone reductase that converts estrogen to an inactive metabolite in breast cancer cells.

The second study looked at the effect of resveratrol on the ability of radiation to kill pancreatic cancer cells.

This study was performed by Dr. Paul Okunieff, chief of Radiation Oncology at the James P. Wilmot Cancer Center at the University of Rochester Medical Center and was reported in the March 2008 issue of Advances in Experimental Medicine and Biology.

Radiation kills cancer cells, in part, by damaging the mitochondria and causing them to release free radicals that destroy DNA and cause the cancer cells to commit suicide (a process called programmed cell death or apoptosis).

It had been hypothesized that naturally occurring antioxidants such as resveratrol would interfere with this process by protecting the mitochondria and destroying free radicals.

And that's exactly what occurs with normal cells.

But when Dr. Okunieff and his colleagues tested pancreatic cancer cells they found that resveratrol actually had the opposite effect.

In the pancreatic cancer cells resveratrol actually damaged the mitochondria and increased free radical formation. The combination of resveratrol and radiation was actually much more effective at killing the cancer cells than radiation treatment alone.

Now I don't mean to suggest that you rush out and add resveratrol to your breast cancer or pancreatic cancer treatment regimen.

These are cell culture studies and need to be replicated in human clinical trials before we consider them for cancer treatment.

However, I do want to point out that the studies that have led to media warnings that resveratrol might increase breast cancer risk or interfere with radiation treatment are also cell culture based.

Perhaps the bigger point here is that being an educated consumer is not an easy thing.

At some point you have to rely on "experts" to interpret the scientific literature for you. And far too often the "experts" select the literature to report to you based on their biases.

You've already heard from the anti-supplement experts warning that resveratrol might cause breast cancer or interfere with cancer treatment.

But I'd be willing to bet that there are probably unscrupulous supplement manufacturers who are touting their resveratrol products as cancer cures based on the types of studies I've shared with you today.

I can't help you sort out all of the half-truths in the media, but I would advise you to try and consider the biases of your "sources" of information before accepting their pronouncements at face value.

These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This information is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure or prevent any disease.

About The Author



Dr. Chaney has a BS in Chemistry from Duke University and a PhD in Biochemistry from UCLA. He currently holds the rank of Professor at a major university where runs an active cancer research program and has published over 100 scientific articles and reviews in peer-reviewed scientific journals.

Dr. Chaney and his wife have also built a business part time that has earned them a 6 -figure income for the past 15 years and he has spent the last 10 years teaching other people how to do the same.

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