



- [Login](#) | [Register](#)
- [Free Subscription](#)
- [Sign Up for Newsletters](#)
- [Join the CURE Survey Panel](#)

- [CURE Magazine](#)
- [Community](#)
 - [Blogs](#)
 - [Message Boards](#)
 - [Extraordinary Healer Award](#)
- [The Cancer Journey](#)
 - [Cancer Journey Overview](#)
 - [Diagnosis](#)
 - [Before Treatment](#)
 - [During Treatment](#)
 - [End of Treatment](#)
 - [Survivorship](#)
 - [Metastatic/ Chronic Cancer](#)
 - [Caregivers & Co-Survivors](#)
 - [Cancer risk/ Prevention/ Detection](#)
- [Cancer Type](#)
 - [Cancer Type Overview](#)
 - [Brain](#)
 - [Breast](#)
 - [Childhood](#)
 - [Colorectal](#)
 - [Head and neck](#)
 - [Leukemia](#)
 - [Lung](#)
 - [Lymphoma](#)
 - [Ovarian](#)
 - [Prostate](#)
 - [Skin](#)
 - [Other Cancer Types](#)
- [Topics](#)
 - [Topics Overview](#)
 - [Fitness & Nutrition](#)
 - [Finance & Legal](#)
 - [Spirit & Healing](#)
- [Toolbox](#)
- [Shop](#)

-



SUMMER / 2010

Features

[The Treatment Option You May Be Missing](#)[Why aren't cancer patients participating in clinical trials?](#)

BY LAURA BEIL

[Progress That's Worth the Wait](#)[A wave of new treatments for chronic lymphocytic leukemia can help keep the disease at bay.](#)

BY KAREN PATTERSON

[Living on the Edge](#)[A growing population of patients have emerged: long-term metastatic cancer survivors.](#)

BY KATHY LATOUR

Contents

Breaking News

[ASCO Updates](#)[Updates from the annual meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology.](#)

BY STAFF REPORTS

First Line

[People, News & Events](#)

EDITED BY ELIZABETH WHITTINGTON

Diagnosis Cancer

[What to Expect When You're Not Expecting—Yet](#)[How to overcome obstacles to fertility preservation.](#)

BY ERIK NESS

Finding Hope

[The Genes That Bind](#)[Parents decide if and when to share genetic risk with a child.](#)

BY CHARLOTTE HUFF

Healing Well

[Sex and Intimacy After Cancer](#)Both physical and emotional issues impact sexuality after cancer.

BY LACEY MEYER

Caregivers' Corner

[Buffer Zone](#)Hiding worries from the patient may do more harm than good.

BY MARC SILVER

In Every Issue

Editor's Page

[Message From the Editor](#)Clinical trial enrollment, and why it matters to all of us.

BY DEBU TRIPATHY, MD

Letters from Our Readers

[Letters From Our Readers](#)

Side Note

[Bad Block](#)Being aware of the dangers of deep vein thrombosis

BY BUNMI ISHOLA

Special Report

[Can an Aspirin a Day Keep Breast Cancer Away?](#)Breast cancer survivors who regularly take aspirin to protect their hearts may enjoy another payoff: a lower risk of recurrence.

BY CHARLOTTE HUFF

Food for Thought

[Mixing It Up](#)Food-drug interactions can adversely affect cancer treatment.

BY DON VAUGHAN

Readers' Forum

[Beginning to End](#)Winning Essay: CURE's 2010 Extraordinary Healer Award for Oncology Nursing

BY VALERIE BOSSELMAN

Drugs in the News

[Pipeline](#)The latest in cancer prevention, diagnosis & treatment

BY KATY HUMAN

Speaking Out

[The Rules](#)The dos and don'ts when someone you know is diagnosed.

BY LESLIE STARSONECK

IN EVERY ISSUE

Mixing It Up

BY DON VAUGHAN

Food-drug interactions can adversely affect cancer treatment.



 [Print this Article](#)

 [E-mail to a Friend](#)

 [Order a Reprint](#)

As if being treated for cancer weren't difficult enough, patients must also be keenly aware of the risks posed by unexpected food-drug interactions. Unfortunately, experts warn, it's a topic many cancer patients know nothing about.

“The issue of food-drug interactions is seldom on a patient's radar because of so many things going on, whether it's emotional issues, changing schedules, or simply dealing with the burden of treatment,” observes D. Milton Stokes, RD, a registered dietitian in Stamford, Connecticut, who works with cancer patients. “If a physician, nurse, or pharmacist doesn't bring it up, often the patient has no idea.”

This can be potentially devastating because the effects of many cancer drugs are easily influenced by commonly consumed foods, beverages, or dietary supplements, reports Mark Ratain, MD, associate director for clinical sciences at the University of Chicago Comprehensive Cancer Center. Cancer drugs, compared with other drugs, have a narrower range over which effectiveness and side effects will fluctuate with just small variations in the drug level or bioactivity.

For example, high-fat meals and grapefruit juice can influence how much of the breast cancer drug

Tykerb (lapatinib) is absorbed in the body. Plus, the prescribing directions for Tasigna (nilotinib), which treats chronic myeloid leukemia, warn that the drug should never be taken with food because it can dangerously increase levels of the drug in the body. To be safe, Tasigna should be taken at least two hours after consuming any food, and another hour should pass after taking the drug before eating.

According to Ratain, there are several ways a food or beverage can affect a medication. This may include inhibition or induction of metabolism, as well as effects on absorption, potentially resulting in very significant increases or decreases in the drug concentration.

“All are areas of concern for patients on any drugs we would consider narrow therapeutic index [any drug which has a less than twofold difference between the minimum toxic concentration and minimum effective concentration in the blood],” Ratain says. “And I would say the vast majority of oncology drugs would be considered narrow therapeutic index.”

“The issue of food-drug interactions is seldom on a patient’s radar because of so many things going on.”

—D. Milton Stokes, RD

Another area of drug interaction often overlooked by patients and physicians is over-the-counter dietary supplements. “I believe that anyone who is taking supplements with their anticancer therapy is playing with fire,” states Ratain.

Ratain’s concern is well founded. Supplements, commonly consumed for everything from mild depression (St. John’s wort) to cold relief (echinacea or chamomile tea), are known to influence the action of certain medications.

“Patients take supplements because they are advertised as natural, and natural is synonymous with safe and healthy,” says Stokes. “I remind them that tobacco and the sun are both natural, and both are cancer-causing agents. So just because something is natural doesn’t necessarily indicate safety.”

What can you do to prevent potentially dangerous food-drug interactions? Foremost, says Ratain, read and follow all drug labels carefully. And don’t hesitate to raise the issue of food-drug interactions with your physician, or ask your pharmacist when you get a prescription filled.

Stokes agrees. “Sometimes providers won’t know the answer, but they will be able to find it somewhere,” he says. “I tell my patients to be the squeaky wheel.”

For additional information about food-drug interactions, visit the American Dietetic Association (www.eatright.org) or the National Cancer Institute (www.cancer.gov).

[^ TOP OF PAGE](#)

Type a Keyword

SEARCH >



TEXT SIZE T T T

FREE Subscription to CURE!

GIVE a gift >
RENEW your subscription >

 The cover of the CURE magazine is shown. It features a large, stylized letter 'C' in the center, with 'A' and 'B' to its left. The title "cure" is at the top in a large, orange, lowercase font. Below the title, there are several headlines, including "What's Best for Breasts" and "The Five Facts About...".

 The Lilly Oncology On Canvas logo is on the left, featuring the word "ONCOLOGY" in a bold, blocky font with "On Canvas" in a script font below it. To the right is the NCCS logo, which includes the letters "NCCS" in a bold, blue font and "NATIONAL COALITION FOR CANCER SURVIVORSHIP" in a smaller font below it. Underneath the Lilly logo is the tagline "Expressions of a Cancer Journey". Underneath the NCCS logo is the tagline "The power of survivorship. The promise of quality care."

AN ART COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION.

REGISTER NOW ➔

 The Lilly logo is written in its signature red script font at the bottom right of the section.

 A photograph of a man and a woman sitting on a lawn. The man is on the left, wearing a black tank top and shorts, and the woman is on the right, wearing a white dress. They are both looking towards the camera.

USE OUR FREE PROFILER TOOLS TO LEARN ABOUT YOUR TREATMENT OPTIONS.

START HERE.

CURE Media Group [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [CMG Corporate](#) | [Awards](#) | [Cancer Continuum](#) | [Press](#) | [FAQ's](#) | [Write for CURE](#)

Advertise [Media Kit](#) | [Reprints](#)

Manage [Subscription Services](#) | [Newsletters](#) | [Join the CURE Survey Panel](#) | [My Account](#)

Legal [Licensing](#) | [Terms of Use](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

© 2010 CURE Media Group. All rights reserved. [Sitemap](#)

CURE does not provide medical, diagnostic, or treatment advice.