The Worst Drinks for Lymphoma: What to Avoid and Why

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6 Drinks to Avoid if You Have Lymphoma

Lymphoma is a type of cancer that affects the lymphatic system, which plays a crucial role in the body's immune function. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle, including proper diet and hydration, is essential for managing symptoms and supporting the body’s natural defenses during treatment. Medications like Adcetris, which is used after chemotherapy, can help minimize damage to healthy cells while fighting off cancerous cells. Certain drinks can be harmful to those battling lymphoma, as they may exacerbate symptoms, interfere with medication or compromise overall health. This article will outline the worst drinks for lymphoma patients and explain why they should be avoided and how they can worsen symptoms.

Cut These Common Drinks From Your Diet

1. Alcohol

Alcohol is one of the most harmful beverages for individuals with lymphoma, and there are multiple reasons why it should be avoided. First, alcohol can weaken the immune system, making it harder for the body to fight infections and recover from treatments like chemotherapy and radiation. Lymphoma treatments often put a significant strain on the immune system, and adding alcohol to the mix can increase the risk of infections or complications.

Secondly, alcohol can interfere with medications commonly prescribed to lymphoma patients. Many lymphoma drugs, such as chemotherapeutic agents and biologics, are metabolized by the liver, and consuming alcohol can put additional stress on this vital organ. This can potentially lead to liver damage or reduced drug efficacy. Even small amounts of alcohol can interact poorly with medications, increasing side effects like nausea, fatigue and liver toxicity.

2. Sugary Beverages

Sugary drinks such as sodas, fruit punches and sweetened teas are detrimental to lymphoma patients for several reasons. High sugar consumption has been linked to inflammation in the body, which can exacerbate cancer symptoms and hinder the body’s ability to recover. While sugar itself doesn't cause cancer, the inflammation it promotes can affect treatment outcomes.

Furthermore, sugary drinks contribute to weight gain, which is a significant concern for lymphoma patients. Treatments like chemotherapy can cause patients to lose or gain weight depending on how their bodies react. For those experiencing weight gain, sugary drinks add empty calories without providing essential nutrients, which can contribute to obesity and other metabolic issues that may worsen lymphoma symptoms.

3. Energy Drinks

Energy drinks are highly caffeinated and loaded with sugars or artificial sweeteners, which makes them especially

dangerous for people with lymphoma. The high caffeine content can lead to increased anxiety, heart palpitations and sleep disturbances, all of which are detrimental for cancer patients who need rest to recover. Caffeine may also exacerbate lymphoma-related fatigue, creating a vicious cycle where patients feel more tired in the long run.

The additives in energy drinks, such as taurine and other stimulants, can also interact negatively with lymphoma treatments, increasing the risk of side effects like nausea, headaches and elevated blood pressure. For these reasons, energy drinks should be avoided by anyone undergoing treatment for lymphoma.

4. Diet Sodas

While diet sodas may seem like a healthier alternative to regular sugary sodas, they are far from ideal for lymphoma patients. The artificial sweeteners used in these beverages, such as aspartame and sucralose, have been associated with inflammation and other negative health effects. Although studies on the link between artificial sweeteners and cancer are inconclusive, some research suggests that excessive consumption of these additives could increase the risk of cancer recurrence.

Additionally, the carbonation in sodas can cause bloating and digestive discomfort, which can be particularly problematic for lymphoma patients undergoing chemotherapy. Chemotherapy often leads to gastrointestinal issues like nausea and bloating, and diet sodas can exacerbate these symptoms.

5. Fruit Juices with Added Sugar

While natural fruit juices can provide some vitamins and antioxidants, many store-bought juices are loaded with added sugars, which make them a poor choice for lymphoma patients. As mentioned earlier, high sugar intake promotes inflammation, which can worsen cancer symptoms and hinder recovery. Moreover, the rapid spike in blood sugar levels caused by sugary juices can lead to energy crashes and increased fatigue, a common side effect of lymphoma and its treatment.

Even juices without added sugar should be consumed in moderation, as they lack the fiber of whole fruits and can still raise blood sugar levels. High blood sugar can interfere with the body’s ability to recover and increase the risk of developing secondary conditions like diabetes.

6. Coffee

For some lymphoma patients, coffee can be problematic due to its high caffeine content. Caffeine can interfere with sleep, exacerbate anxiety and contribute to dehydration, all of which are detrimental to those undergoing cancer treatment. Dehydration is particularly concerning, as lymphoma treatments can already lead to fluid imbalances, and proper hydration is essential for flushing out toxins and maintaining overall health.

Additionally, coffee is acidic and can irritate the stomach lining, which may worsen nausea and other gastrointestinal symptoms that are common during lymphoma treatment.

Treatment Options for Lymphoma

Lymphoma treatment is tailored based on the type and stage of the cancer, as well as the patient’s overall health. Below is a detailed list of the most common treatment options for lymphoma:

Chemotherapy

Chemotherapy uses powerful drugs to kill rapidly growing cancer cells throughout the body. It’s often the first line of treatment for both Hodgkin and non-Hodgkin lymphoma. Chemotherapy can be delivered orally or through intravenous (IV) infusion. While effective, it comes with side effects such as nausea, fatigue, hair loss and a weakened immune system, which make patients more susceptible to infections. Different chemotherapy regimens may be used depending on the type of lymphoma, such as CHOP (Cyclophosphamide, Doxorubicin, Vincristine and Prednisone) for non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy uses high-energy rays to target and kill cancer cells in specific areas. This treatment is often used for localized lymphoma or to shrink tumors that are causing discomfort or compressing vital organs. Side effects of radiation therapy can include skin irritation, fatigue and damage to nearby healthy tissues. For patients with early-stage Hodgkin lymphoma, radiation may be combined with chemotherapy for better results.

Targeted Therapy

Targeted therapies are drugs that specifically attack the molecular changes driving lymphoma. One such drug, Adcetris (brentuximab vedotin), is used primarily for Hodgkin lymphoma and some types of non-Hodgkin lymphoma. It works by attaching to a protein (CD30) found on the surface of cancer cells, delivering a chemotherapy agent directly to those cells, minimizing damage to healthy cells. Adcetris is often used when traditional chemotherapy has failed or in patients at high risk of relapse. Side effects can include neuropathy, nausea and low blood cell counts.

Immunotherapy

Immunotherapy enhances the body’s own immune system to better recognize and destroy lymphoma cells. Drugs like immune checkpoint inhibitors can block proteins on cancer cells that prevent the immune system from attacking them. Immunotherapy is especially useful for patients with relapsed or refractory lymphoma. Side effects can include flu-like symptoms, skin reactions and potential autoimmune reactions, where the immune system attacks healthy tissues.

Stem Cell Transplant

A stem cell transplant (also known as a bone marrow transplant) is often used for patients with aggressive lymphoma or those who have relapsed after initial treatment. This procedure involves replacing damaged bone marrow with healthy stem cells to restore normal blood cell production. It is usually preceded by high-dose chemotherapy to eliminate as many cancer cells as possible.

There are two types: autologous (using the patient's own stem cells) and allogeneic (using donor cells). Side effects can include a higher risk of infections, graft-versus-host disease (in allogeneic transplants) and prolonged recovery times.

Final Notes

Managing lymphoma involves more than just medical treatment—it also requires careful consideration of lifestyle choices, including what you drink. Certain beverages can all worsen symptoms, interfere with medications and hinder recovery. Always talk to your doctor about lifestyle and diet changes you should make while undergoing treatment for lymphoma.