

# Radiation may help after surgery for 'soft-tissue' cancers

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(HealthDay)—Older patients with a type of cancer called soft-tissue

sarcomas may benefit more from radiation therapy after surgery than younger patients do, a new study suggests.

The results might change the way [older patients](#) are treated for soft-tissue sarcomas, which are cancers that develop in muscles, fat and other types of tissue, the study authors said.

Surgery is typically used to treat these cancers. But it hasn't been clear if [radiation therapy](#) after [surgery](#) improved survival.

The new study looked at information from more than 15,300 U.S. adults with localized soft-tissue sarcomas. Some were treated with surgery alone, while others had surgery and radiation. Treatments occurred between 1990 and 2011.

Radiation after surgery improved survival compared to surgery alone, but this was seen mostly in patients 65 and older, the study showed.

"We found that older patients had a survival benefit with radiation, but in younger patients, many of those benefits went away," said principal investigator Dr. Robert Canter, an associate professor of surgery at the University of California, Davis.

"It seems that older patients respond better to the combination of surgery and radiation," he said in a university news release.

Because the study findings were based on observations of previous trial data, it did not prove that radiation benefited older patients.

Further research is needed to confirm the findings and to learn more about why [radiation](#) after surgery seems to offer greater benefits to older patients, Canter said. With follow-up, this might lead to improved treatment for older patients, he said.

The study was published April 11 in the journal *Anticancer Research*.

**More information:** The U.S. National Cancer Institute has more about [soft-tissue sarcoma](#).

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