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[How being married can help you survive cancer: Having a spouse brings greater benefits than chemotherapy](#)

- **Study by Harvard University looked at 750,000 patients**
- **Found married sufferers had 20 per cent better chance of surviving**
- **Benefit for breast and colon cancer patients outweighed benefit of chemo**

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Marriage makes you less likely to die from cancer, a study shows.

Men and women who have tied the knot were found to have a 20 per cent greater chance of surviving the disease than single people.

In half the cancers studied, having a spouse brought even greater benefits than chemotherapy.

The researchers said a watchful husband or wife made it easier to catch the disease early – and then help to beat it. Paul Nguyen, the radiation oncologist who led the US study, said the findings sent a clear message.

‘If you have a friend or a loved one or someone you care about with cancer, you can potentially make a big difference in their outcome by going with them to their doctor’s visit, and helping them understand their diagnosis,’ he said.

‘By being there for that person and helping them navigate their appointments and make it through all their treatments, you can make a real difference to that person’s outcome.’ The researchers at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute and Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston analysed data from 734,800 cancer patients.

Men had a 23 per cent higher chance of beating cancer if they were married, compared with 16 per cent for women.

This suggested that the ‘nag factor’, in which women are more likely to insist on their husband going to a doctor to seek help, might have a part to play.

The findings showed the biggest improvement in survival rates was for head and neck cancers and for non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

Married patients were more likely to have the right treatment and much more likely to stick with it.

They also had 17 per cent less chance of their cancer spreading – indicating that couples find the disease faster and get it checked out sooner.

The improvements in survival rates put down to marriage – and better than those for chemotherapy – were seen in prostate, breast, colorectal, oesophageal and head or neck cancers. The study participants had one of ten cancers: lung, colorectal, breast, pancreatic, prostate, liver/bile duct, non-Hodgkin lymphoma, head and neck, ovarian and oesophageal cancer.

They were all American and were diagnosed with the illnesses between 2004 and 2008.

Previous research has said that married people are happier than cohabiters and significantly more content than those who are single, divorced or separated.

Figures from the Office for National Statistics show that 21.6million of the 44.9million adults who live in England and Wales are married – 48.4 per cent of the total.

Marriage appears to be coming back into fashion after 40 years of decline.

The number of unions rose 3.7 per cent in 2010, the latest year for which figures are available.

The economic downturn is seen as one reason for a return to family values as people seek stability during the hard

times.

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