



Physical Activity and Cancer Treatment

Did You Know?

Whether you are a walker or a jogger, like to dance or ride a bike, *all* types of physical activity can have positive health benefits! Begin slowly with activities that you enjoy, and work your way towards moderate or vigorous intensity.

In the past, people being treated for a chronic illness like cancer were often told to rest and reduce their physical activity. This is good advice if movement causes pain, rapid heart rate, or shortness of breath. But newer research has shown that exercise is not only safe and possible during cancer treatment, but it can also improve how well you function physically and your quality of life. Though the exact connection between physical activity and cancer recovery is still unknown, exercise during cancer treatment can improve balance, lower the risk of disease and certain cancers, relieve nausea, lessen fatigue, and control weight.

Be Active *During* Treatment

- Engage in low-intensity exercise at first, such as a slow walk around the block.
- Avoid *vigorous* exercise when your blood count is low or if you are at risk for infection.
- Be active when you feel your best.
- Most cancer patients will experience fatigue and loss of energy during treatment, however, exercise can break this cycle!
- Physical activity is thought to reduce fatigue and increase the ability to perform daily activities without becoming tired.

Stay Active *After* Treatment

- Gradually build up to moderate intensity for 30 minutes a day, 5 days per week.
- Moderate intensity activities (an activity that takes as much effort as a brisk walk) can reduce the risk of cancer reoccurrence and may help one live longer.
- Keep in mind that a low- to moderate-intensity exercise may feel like a higher-intensity exercise following cancer treatment.



Build a Physical Activity Plan that Works for You

Engaging in physical activity will help you feel better and recover more quickly; however, getting started may be hard for some. Follow these simple steps for help in getting your physical activity plan started:

- Start slowly.
- Rest when you need to.
- Begin with a low-intensity activity for a few minutes a day.
- Gradually build intensity and time up to 30 minutes a day, 5 days a week.
- If easily fatigued, instead of exercising for 30 minutes at a time, break the activity into three 10 minute sessions per day.
- Include aerobic exercise (anything that increases your heart rate- brisk walking, cycling, or swimming).
- Include exercises that help maintain lean muscle and bone strength (using light weights or resistance bands).
- Be sure to warm-up for 2 to 3 minutes before exercise, and stretch afterwards to keep muscles and joints flexible.
- Drink plenty of water; you may easily dehydrate after treatment.
- Choose a variety of activities, so you do not get bored or tired with the same activity.
- Be active with a friend or family member for extra support or encouragement.

Physical activity ideas and tips:

- Instead of driving when you need to do an errand, walk if it is feasible.
- Take the stairs instead of riding the elevator.
- Invest in a bike for outside or stationary bike for the house.
- Swim laps at the local pool or participate in a water aerobics course.
- Walk around the block or park and increase the number of laps daily until you reach your goal.
- Buy a pedometer (step counter) and increase your number of steps daily.
- Check the pantry. Lifting cans, detergent bottles, or anything heavy will build muscle. Do three sets of 10 lifts, or until you feel your muscles tiring.

Get additional physical activity tips from the American Cancer Society

<http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorshipduringandaftertreatment/stayingactive/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient>