

Should I exercise during cancer treatment and recovery?

Research strongly suggests that exercise is not only safe during cancer treatment, but it can also improve physical functioning and many aspects of quality of life.

Moderate exercise has been shown to improve:

- Fatigue (extreme tiredness)
- Anxiety
- Self-esteem
- Heart and blood vessel fitness
- Muscle strength
- Body composition (how much of your body is made up of fat, bone or muscle)



KEEP CALM and WALK ON pedometers are provided free of charge to encourage walking during and after cancer treatment.

For more information visit www.cancerkansas.org.

The information in this brochure is part of an article developed by the American Cancer Society 2010 Nutrition, Physical Activity and Cancer Survivorship Advisory Committee. The full article, Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines for Cancer Survivors, published in the April/May 2012 issue of CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians is available for free online at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.3322/caac.21142/abstract>.



Exercise can improve your quality of life!

Talk with your doctor about how much and what kind of physical activity is right for you.

KEEP CALM AND WALK ON

Guidelines

People getting chemotherapy and radiation who already exercise may need to do so at a lower intensity and build up more slowly than people who are not getting cancer treatment.

The main goal should be to stay as active as possible and slowly increase your level of activity over time after treatment.



Are there special precautions survivors should consider?

Certain issues for cancer survivors may prevent or affect their ability to exercise. Some effects of treatment may increase the risk for exercise-related problems. For instance:

- People with severe anemia (low red blood cell counts) should delay activity until the anemia is better.
- Those with weak immune systems should avoid public gyms and other public places until their white blood cell counts return to safe levels
- People getting radiation should avoid swimming pools because chlorine may irritate the skin at the treatment area.

If you were not active before diagnosis, you should start with low-intensity activities and then slowly increase your activity level. Certain people should use extra caution to reduce their risk of falls and injuries:

- Older people
- Those with bone disease (cancer in the bones or thinning bones, such as osteoporosis)
- People with arthritis
- Anyone with nerve damage (peripheral neuropathy)

Can regular exercise reduce the risk of cancer coming back?

This has not been looked at for all types of cancer, but there have been studies of survivors of breast, colorectal, prostate and ovarian cancers. In these studies, people with higher levels of physical activity after diagnosis lived longer and had less chance of the cancer coming back. Still, more studies are needed to see if exercise has a direct effect on cancer growth.



In the meantime, since physical activity is known to prevent heart and blood vessel disease, diabetes and osteoporosis, cancer survivors should try to have a physically active lifestyle.