

Benefits of Exercise During Chemotherapy

Exercise is an important part of any cancer treatment plan.¹ A growing amount of research shows that regular exercise can greatly improve physical and mental health during every phase of treatment.¹

Always talk with your doctor before you start an exercise program during or after cancer treatment.¹ If you were physically active before treatment, you may not be able to follow the same exercise routine as before.¹

Staying active during chemotherapy may help²:

- Reduce side effects
- Reduce the risk of depression and anxiety
- Enhance sleep and overall quality of life
- Manage weight
- Improve your ability to perform daily activities
- Strengthen bones and muscles
- Possibly reduce risk of new cancers and health issues

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network[®] (NCCN[®]) recommends regular daily physical activity.³

Increase your heart rate

by engaging in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity each week

Move more and rest less every day

by doing routine or fun physical activities or exercise



Every patient's treatment journey is different.

While it's important to stay active during treatment, the activities listed are recommendations and should be discussed with your care team before engaging in any exercise.

Stretch your major muscle groups

(2 days per week recommended)

Participate in strength/resistance training

(2-3 times per week recommended)

See next page for a list of activities.

Physical Activity⁴

- Any movement carried out by the muscles that requires energy
- Movement at any intensity, performed throughout the day
- Not all physical activity is exercise

vs.

Exercise⁴

- Activity requiring physical effort, carried out to sustain or improve health and fitness
- Planned, structured, repetitive, and intentional movement
- Goal = increase physical fitness

Here are some tips to make sure that you get the most out of your workout plan¹:

Start slowly. Even if you worked out before treatment, build up your level of activity over time. This will help you to stay positive and avoid injury.

Select safe environments. If you are prone to infection or have a weakened immune system, avoid large gyms.

Be mindful of your body. If your energy level is low, adjust the intensity and duration of your exercise routines until you feel better.

Hydrate! Drink plenty of fluids while exercising to avoid dehydration.

Eat smart. Protein-rich foods help your body recover after exercise. Your care team can help develop a customized nutrition plan for you.

Check with your care team. Routine screenings and discussions with your care team will let you know that it's safe to continue exercising.

Exercising safely during treatment¹

It is important to be careful while exercising if you are having side effects from your cancer or its treatment. For example, if treatment is affecting the nerves in your hand, weight machines may be safer to use than hand weights. You may have to change your exercise plan depending on your specific side effects.

Always check with your doctor before beginning a new exercise routine.



Light exercise³

(No noticeable change in breathing pattern)

- Leisurely biking
- Activity-promoting video game
- Light housework
- Bowling
- Playing catch
- Slow walking
- Child care
- Gentle yoga
- Tai chi



Moderate exercise³

(Can talk, but not sing)

- Ballroom or line dancing
- Biking on level ground
- General gardening
- Baseball, softball, volleyball
- Doubles tennis
- Using a manual wheelchair
- Brisk walking
- Water aerobics
- Moderate-intensity yoga
- Pilates



Vigorous exercise³

(Can say a few words without stopping to catch a breath)

- Aerobic or fast dancing
- Biking fast
- Heavy gardening
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Martial arts
- Speed walking, jogging, running
- Running sports
- Swimming (fast pace)
- Singles tennis
- Stair climbing
- High-intensity yoga

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References:

1. Exercise during cancer treatment. Cancer.Net. <https://www.cancer.net/survivorship/healthy-living/exercise-during-cancer-treatment>. Published January 27, 2022. Accessed April 28, 2022. 2. Physical activity and the person with cancer. American Cancer Society. <https://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient.html>. Accessed April 28, 2022. 3. NCCN Guidelines for Patients[®] for Survivorship Care for Healthy Living, 2020. © 2022 National Comprehensive Cancer Network, All Rights Reserved. Accessed May 2, 2022. To view the most recent and complete version of the NCCN Guidelines for Patients, visit [NCCN.org/patientguidelines](https://www.nccn.org/patientguidelines). 4. Exercise vs. physical activity. Penn State College of Medicine Research. <https://research.med.psu.edu/oncology-nutrition-exercise/patient-guides/exercise-vs-activity/>. Published August 11, 2021. Accessed April 28, 2022.