

EXERCISING WITH CANCER



During your cancer therapy, a safe and effective exercise program can help increase your energy and strength, enhance balance and coordination, and help maintain your muscle strength. Physical activity can also improve your overall feelings of well-being and reduce the pain, nausea, and fatigue commonly associated with treatment, while lessening the side effects of many drug treatments. Exercise may even keep some kinds of cancers from re-occurring! The key is to determine what type of exercise is best for you and to follow a program that accommodates your individual needs and concerns.

Getting Started

- Talk with your oncologist/surgeon about integrating regular exercise into your treatment plan.
- Recommended activities include walking, bicycling, swimming and other low-impact exercises, low-intensity strength training, and stretching to enhance mobility.
- Start slowly and very gradually progress how hard and how long you workout. In fact, you may find it most comfortable to gradually progress the time of your activity up to about 20 minutes or more before you start to push harder.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed.

Exercise Cautions

- There is no optimal exercise program for exercising with cancer—the goal is to preserve and possibly improve function. Be prepared to modify your activity as needed based on your current condition or reactions to changes in treatment.
- Treatments such as surgery or other therapies may limit your activity due to muscle weakness or pain. For example, women who have undergone mastectomy or lumpectomy may have limited strength and range of motion in their chest, arms, and shoulders.
- If you are receiving radiation therapy, perspiration may irritate your skin due to skin breakdown. Choose appropriate workout attire and try to keep your skin dry to avoid irritation.
- Ask your healthcare team to help you learn optimal ways to manage side effects of treatment (e.g. nausea, vomiting, pain) so that you can exercise comfortably.

Your exercise program should be designed to maximize the benefits with the fewest risks of aggravating your health or physical condition. Consider contacting a certified health and fitness professional* who can work with you and your health care provider to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.

IN THE SERIES:

- > Cardiovascular Diseases
- > Pulmonary Diseases
- > Metabolic Diseases
- > Immunological/ Hematological Disorders
- > Orthopedic Diseases and Disabilities
- > Neuromuscular Disorders

*If your health care provider has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored in a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org or e-mail eim@acsm.org.

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