

Exercise During and After Cancer Treatment

General Information

After a cancer diagnosis, it is important to return to being physically active as soon as possible. Exercise has many benefits that help your body, mind and spirit.

According to the American Cancer Society, exercise can help you recover from treatment side effects, help prevent long-term effects and **may** reduce the risk that cancer returns.

(Source: Cancer Treatment & Survivorship Facts & Figures 2014-2015, page 28.)

There are 3 parts of a fitness program:

- cardio (raising your heart rate)
- flexibility (stretching your muscles)
- weight training (strengthening your muscles).

Your physical therapist can help create an exercise plan just for you.

If you have a condition that limits your ability to exercise, or you feel too weak or tired to be active, tell your physical therapist.

Cardio

- Do 30 minutes of cardio at least 5 times a week. You can split up the 30 minutes into 10-minute chunks — it will still help you.
- Try to get 150 to 300 minutes of moderate exercise a week or 75 to 150 minutes of vigorous exercise each week. (See the chart on the back for examples.)
- Together, you and your physical therapist will develop the best exercise program for you.

- If you choose to walk, use a pedometer to track your steps or time.
- Find exercises that you enjoy doing.
- Work with your physical therapist to find the cardio intensity level that is right for you.

Flexibility

- Be sure to stretch after you exercise.
- Stretching helps your joints keep a healthy range of motion. This will help make everyday activities easier.
- Stretching can help reduce pain and discomfort caused by tight muscles or scar tissue.
- Stretching can reduce stress, lower muscle tension and improve your circulation and posture.
- Your physical therapist will find stretches that are right and safe for you.

Weight Training

- Together, you and your physical therapist will create a weight training program that meets your needs.
- Do weight training at least 2 times a week.
- Wait at least 1 day between weight training workouts so your muscles can recover.
- Start low and go slow if you are at risk for developing lymphedema. You should be able to complete 10 repetitions at a weight without significant muscle fatigue or muscle burn.

(over)

- You should be able to lift a weight 10 times (repetitions) without muscle fatigue or burn.
- Lifting weights can help prevent muscle loss, build bone density and increase the rate your body burns calories.
- It is normal to have some soreness in the muscles you trained 24 to 48 hours after your workout. This muscle soreness should go away in 1 to 2 days. If it lasts longer than that, you have over done it.
- Exercise should not hurt while you are doing it but you should feel a slow burn in the muscle you are training. When you stop the activity, that burn should go away.
- You should not have sharp or strong pain when you lift weights.

When To Call Your Doctor

Stop exercising and call your doctor if you have chest pain or shortness of breath.

When To Call Your Physical Therapist

Call your physical therapist if you have increased pain or swelling after you exercise.

Examples of Exercises	
Moderate Exercise	Vigorous Exercise
walking briskly (about 3 ½ miles per hour)	running/jogging (5 miles per hour)
bicycling (5 to 9 miles per hour)	bicycling (more than 10 miles per hour)
swimming (recreational)	swimming (freestyle laps)
water aerobics	aerobics
sports such as volleyball, baseball, softball or doubles tennis	sports such as singles tennis, football, basketball, soccer, hockey or lacrosse
using an upper body ergometer (arm cycling)	jumping rope
light yard work such as raking, bagging leaves or trimming shrubs	heavy yard work such as digging large holes or carrying heavy loads