



Exercise and Cancer

Exercise offers far-reaching benefits for cancer survivors. It can help reduce fatigue, increase energy physical function, improve quality of life, and even help with certain side effects of treatment. Research shows that exercise can be safe both during and after cancer treatment. We encourage all patients to live an active lifestyle.

How much exercise should I get?

Depending on your age, previous exercise experience, energy levels, side effects from treatment, and other health concerns, exercise recommendations may vary. **Please talk with your physician before beginning an exercise program.** You may need a personalized exercise plan if you have: extreme fatigue, osteoporosis, peripheral neuropathies, or most serious medical issues. Some general recommendations from the American Cancer Society:

- **Every week, get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity**
- **Muscle-strengthening activities are recommended on 2 or more days per week**

Start your exercise routine under the supervision of a physical therapist, exercise physiologist, or certified personal trainer. To find a **Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer** in your area, visit <http://certification.acsm.org>, click on "Find a Pro," and select "ACSM/ACS Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer" in the dropdown menu on the search page. *MyFitnessPal* is another option: a free mobile fitness application.

Types of exercise

<p>Aerobic Exercise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking • Running • Biking • Swimming • Hiking 	<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased energy • Improved mood • Improved blood sugar control • Improved cholesterol • Weight management/loss • Decreased blood pressure • Decreased risk of osteoporosis • Reduces the risk of developing heart disease
<p>Strength Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weightlifting • Bodyweight exercises • Resistance bands 	<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased lean body mass • Increased bone health • Increased muscle strength • Improved blood sugar control • Increased energy • Improved mood
<p>Flexibility Training</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stretching • Yoga/Pilates 	<p>Benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More relaxed • Improved mood

How to get started

- Start slowly and progress slowly
- Exercise in several 10-minute increments throughout the day
- Build up to 30 minutes of exercise every day
- Choose an activity that you enjoy

How can I fit exercise into my day?

- Walk or bike to your destination
- Use a stationary bike or treadmill while you watch TV
- Exercise with family, friends, or co-workers
- Take a short walk on your lunch break
- Wear a pedometer and try to add steps whenever you can
- Take the stairs instead of using an elevator or escalator

Moderate Exercise

- Ballroom and line dancing
- Canoeing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, volleyball, softball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Walking briskly
- Water aerobics

Vigorous Exercise

- Biking faster than 10 miles/hour
- Aerobic/fast dancing
- Heavy gardening (digging, hoeing)
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Jogging or running
- Sports with a lot of running (basketball, hockey, soccer)
- Swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)

Source: www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/factSheetAdults.aspx

Is it 'moderate' or 'vigorous' exercise?

A great way to tell the difference between whether you are engaging in **moderate** or **vigorous** exercise is to see how your body is responding to the activity.

- **Moderate:** If you still have the ability to hold a conversation while engaging in a particular exercise, that exercise would generally be considered moderate.
- **Vigorous:** If you are only able to say one or two words due to shortness of breath, that exercise would generally be considered vigorous.

Still have questions?

For more information or to make an appointment with Dana-Farber exercise physiologist Nancy Campbell, call **617-632-4LAD (Life After Diagnosis)** or email **dfci_adultsurvivors@dfci.harvard.edu**. Learn more online at **www.dana-farber.org/exercise**.

This document is for informational purposes only. The content is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.