

Exercise

Tips for Getting Started

Exercise seems so easy to think about, but so hard to do. You may be asking yourself “What about me? As a cancer survivor, should I be exercising?” For most survivors, the answer is yes. Research shows that exercise benefits those who are undergoing cancer treatment and those who have completed treatment. Exercise has been shown to improve energy levels, physical fitness, and quality of life in people with cancer.

“Exercise is medicine”

American College of Sports Medicine

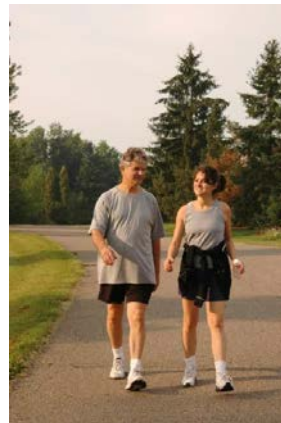
<https://www.exerciseismedicine.org>

Why should I exercise?

Exercise is something you can do for free to improve your physical and mental health.

Exercise:

- Lowers stress and anxiety
- Helps manage weight
- Enhances the immune system
- Increases energy and endurance
- Lowers blood pressure
- Reduces the chance of heart disease and type 2 diabetes
- Reduces the risk of osteoporosis
- Improves strength and balance
- Reduces mental fatigue
- Improves cognitive function



How do I start?

First, ask your health care provider if there are any exercises you should not do. If you have physical limitations as a result of your cancer or cancer treatment, it may be helpful to talk with a physical therapist or rehabilitation specialist. Once you have the OK from your health care provider, use some of the tips below to get started.

Tips:

Choose exercises you enjoy. It is easier to stick with an exercise program if you enjoy it. If you like to dance, sign up for a dance class that gets you moving. Or join a community sports team if you like team sports. If you cannot imagine yourself enjoying any type of exercise, find a friend to exercise with to make it more enjoyable.

Start out slow.

It is recommended that you exercise for at least 30 minutes at a moderate intensity 3 times a week. When doing moderate intensity exercise, you should be able to talk, but not sing.

Your heart rate should be up and you should breathe faster than normal but you should not be working so hard that you get worn out after a few minutes. If you are just starting an exercise program, begin with shorter exercise sessions and work your way up to longer sessions. Start with sessions as short as 5 minutes. As you get stronger and develop the exercise habit, increase your session to 10 minutes, then 15 minutes, and so on.



Break it up.

If you feel like you do not have time or energy for your full exercise session, divide it into shorter sessions. Three 10-minute exercise sessions are just as beneficial as one 30-minute session and may be easier to fit into your schedule.

Set short term, specific and realistic goals.

For example, try exercising 15 minutes a day for 4 days a week. Once you can do that, you can slowly increase the time you exercise. Use these short-term goals to build up to longer term goals.

Monitor your activity.

Many people find that it helps them to monitor their progress in writing. This can be as simple as keeping track of the days you exercise on a calendar posted on your refrigerator. Or you can create a graph of the amount of time you exercise each week so you can view your progress.

Fit exercise into your normal day.

Use a treadmill or stationary bike while you watch TV. You can also walk, jog or jump rope in place. If you like to read, ride a stationary bike while you read. A walk or bike ride to your destination, rather than driving, is another way to add exercise into your routine. You can also take the stairs instead of the elevator.

Reward yourself.

Exercise has many benefits, but many of them are longer term, so they do not reinforce behavior change right away. Identify some rewards you can give yourself when you accomplish your goals. It is probably easy to think of things to buy yourself for rewards – you could put off buying a new CD, book or exercise clothes until you achieve your exercise goal.

Your rewards do not have to cost money. For example, you could reward yourself by taking time to call a friend you have not talked with in a while or setting aside time to do an activity that you enjoy.

Do not give up if you miss one or two sessions.

Starting an exercise program, or increasing the amount of exercise you do, is an important step in developing a healthier lifestyle. However, you are changing your lifestyle, and it may not be easy. Some weeks you will make your goals; others you might fall short. If you do not make your exercise goal, do not see that as a sign that you are not an “exerciser.” Examine your goals to make sure they are realistic, then, make a plan for the next week. Whether you want to do a 5-minute walk or a 50-minute walk, one of the most important habits you can develop is planning when this walk will occur. So find an exercise you enjoy, make a plan, and start moving.

How much should I exercise?

The more intense an exercise, the shorter amount of time you need to exercise to get the same benefits. You can also do a lower intensity exercise for a longer amount of time to get the same benefits. The table below lists some common exercises, their intensity level, and how many minutes per week you would need to engage in that activity for good health.

Patient Education

Activity	Intensity (how hard)	Duration (how long per week)
Walking	About 3.5 mph	150 minutes
Jogging	Light (about 5 mph)	90 minutes
Swimming	General (not lap swimming)	90 minutes
Dancing	Ballroom	180 minutes
Dancing	Fast, modern	110 minutes
Aerobics	Low impact	110 minutes
Water aerobics	Regular	135 minutes
Stationary cycling	Light effort	180 minutes
Cycling	Outdoors (about 10 mph)	90 minutes
Tennis	Regular doubles	80 minutes

Source: 2011 Compendium of Physical Activities: A Second Update of C... : Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise (lww.com)
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