



CANCERcare®

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# STAYING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE DURING AND AFTER CANCER TREATMENT

Staying physically active can play a key role during and after treatment. Physical activity can help you keep your strength up, which can help you finish your full course of treatment or maintain post-treatment fitness. Talk to your doctor about what kind of physical activity is best for you.

## POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF EXERCISE

Exercise can improve your ability, in both mind and body, to cope with cancer. It can contribute to:

- Lowered risk of osteoporosis (weak bones that are more likely to break)
- Reduced fatigue
- Reduced stress
- Increased blood flow throughout your body
- Improved quality of life and self-esteem
- A greater sense of control



## TALKING TO YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT EXERCISING

Before starting any type of exercise, it's important to talk with your doctor. Whether you are currently going through treatment or post-treatment, you and your doctor should consider the following:

- **Is exercise right for you?** Talk to your doctor about any physical changes you may experience during or after treatment that may affect you exercising.
- **What type of exercise is best for you?** It is important to keep in mind your physical comfort level. This is particularly important if you experience nerve damage, or neuropathy, that is limiting your movement.
- **Should you consult a nutritionist or registered dietitian?** Another way to improve your ability to exercise is to consult a nutritionist or registered dietitian. Finding a diet tailored to your specific needs can help increase your energy and rebuild your muscles and bones. Your doctor may be able to recommend someone that can help you with your diet.

## TIPS FOR BEING PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Including exercise in your day doesn't have to mean having a gym membership. It may be best to start small, especially if you are experiencing fatigue. There are plenty of small changes that can be made to increase your physical activity.

**Walking.** Walking is a gentle way to get into exercising. You may want to start by walking 5 to 10 minutes and build from there.

**Stairs.** Instead of the elevator or escalator, use the stairs.

**Yoga.** Many people living with cancer find a sense of peace participating in yoga, an ancient practice combining breathing, relaxation and meditation exercises. Yoga poses can be modified so they can be done while seated in a chair. Called Chair Yoga, this form of yoga should be done by a certified practitioner. To learn more about yoga, read CancerCare's fact sheet titled "Yoga and Cancer."

**Walk more when on the go.** If you are on a bus or subway, get off the stop before yours and walk the extra few blocks. If driving, park away from the door to increase the number of steps you have to take.

**Tai chi.** Tai chi is an excellent exercise for maintaining bone health because it builds strength and also improves balance.

**Arm lifts.** Try some upper body exercises while sitting in a chair—moving your arms up and down and front to back can help maintain flexibility. Making a fist and lifting your arms up and down in front of you can increase strength.

**Make sure to drink plenty water when physically active and pay attention to your breathing.** Rounded shoulders restrict chest movement, but good posture helps your breathing and reduces fatigue. Focus on maximizing your breath during activities; for example, when climbing stairs, breathe out with each step so you won't be as tired when you reach the top.

**Give yourself credit for any exercise you do, and reward yourself when you are able to do more.** Remember to celebrate each small success.



### CancerCare® Can Help

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by master's-prepared oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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