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Physical Activity and Cancer Risk [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board \[2\]](#), 01/2016

Making moderate to vigorous physical activity a part of your lifestyle lowers your risk of cancer and that of other chronic diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes. Moderate to vigorous physical activity is exercise that makes you sweat and your heart beat faster. It includes walking, swimming, cycling, or running. A growing body of research suggests that doing any kind of activity to avoid too much sitting can help lower cancer risk.

Physical activity may lower cancer risk

Research shows that people who exercise regularly appear to have a lower cancer risk.

- **Colon cancer.** Studies that follow large groups of people over time show that individuals who exercise regularly appear to have a lower risk of developing colon cancer. Although we do not know for sure that exercise itself is lowering the cancer risk, people who exercise regularly have a 40% to 50% lower risk of colon cancer, compared with those who don't exercise regularly. Some evidence suggests that people who are active their entire lives have the lowest risk of colon cancer.
- **Breast cancer.** Similar large, long-term studies show that women who engage in moderate to vigorous exercise for more than 3 hours per week have a 30% to 40% lower risk of breast cancer. This applies to all women, regardless of family history or risk of breast cancer.

Some studies show that the higher the activity level, the lower the cancer risk. However, it

is unclear whether a specific activity level must be met to reduce risk. Activity throughout a person's life is important, but activity at any age may help lower breast cancer risk.

- **Uterine cancer.** Some research has linked exercise to lower risk of uterine cancer.
- **Lung cancer.** Studies show that regularly active people are less likely to develop lung cancer.

There is a lot of ongoing research on physical activity and its effects on cancer. Recent research shows that even light activity can provide some health benefits. Light activity is anything you do to avoid sitting or lying down.

Tips for children and teens

To support a lifetime of physical activity, children and adolescents should be regularly active. Physical activity patterns that start during childhood often carry into adulthood. Children should get moderate or vigorous activity for at least 60 minutes a day. At least 3 days per week, children and teens should be vigorously active. Here are some ways you can encourage activity in children:

- Cut down on TV time
- Limit time playing video games
- Limit computer use and use of other electronic devices
- Participate in sports or fitness activities
- Play actively at school or home

More Information

[Physical Activity Tips for Survivors](#) [3]

[Prevention and Healthy Living](#) [4]

[Obesity and Cancer](#) [5]

Additional Resources

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Physical Activity and Health](#) [6]

[National Cancer Institute: Physical Activity and Cancer](#) [7]

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/prevention-and-healthy-living/physical-activity-and-cancer-risk>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24996>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24868>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/31046>

[6] <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/everyone/health/>

[7] <http://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/obesity/physical-activity-fact-sheet>