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## **Physical Activity Tips for Survivors [1]**

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

Cancer survivors should be physically active during and after treatment. Research shows that regular physical activity can reduce the risk of some cancers recurring. It can also make you feel better after treatment ends. An active lifestyle can:

- Improve self-esteem
- Increase happiness
- Reduce depression, anxiety, and fatigue
- Build strength and endurance
- Promote a healthy weight

### **Defining different activity levels**

Physical activity can be divided into 3 levels: light, moderate, and vigorous. You can be physically active anywhere, including at home, outside, or in a gym.

- **Light activity:** During light activity, you are not sitting or lying down or standing still. You may not be exerting yourself, but you are not inactive. Examples include washing dishes, walking slowly, preparing food, and making the bed.
- **Moderate activity.** During moderate activity, you should be breathing as hard as you would when walking quickly. You should be able to talk, but would prefer not to. Walking is a great moderate activity. Other examples include ballroom dancing, canoeing, and gardening.
- **Vigorous activity.** During vigorous activity, your heart will beat faster and you will be breathing heavily and sweating. Vigorous activities include jogging, jumping rope, and swimming.

## Tips for activity for cancer survivors

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the American Cancer Society, and the American College of Sports Medicine provide the following recommendations for living a physically active life.

1. **Avoid inactivity.** Any kind of physical activity can be helpful, even if it isn't moderate or vigorous intensity. More studies are showing that being too sedentary increases risk for some cancers. Being sedentary means you spend most of your time sitting and not being active.
2. **Be regularly active.** Each week, try to get at least 150 minutes of moderate activity or at least 75 minutes of vigorous activity. For best results, spread these activities throughout the week.
3. **Include strength training.** Lift weights and do other muscle-building exercise at least 2 days a week.
4. **Short sessions help.** If you don't have the time or energy for a long exercise session, go for shorter periods. The health benefits of several short, 10-minute segments are similar to those of 1 longer exercise session.
5. **Start slow.** If you are new to exercise, slowly increase the length and intensity of your physical activity. Keep ramping up until you reach 30 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity a day.

## Questions to ask your doctor about physical activity

Your doctor or health care team members can help answer questions about physical activity. They can direct you to helpful exercise resources. Consider asking your doctor:

- How will physical activity improve my health?
- What type of activity should I do?
- Is it safe to exercise during cancer treatment?
- Are there weight limits or certain exercises to avoid?
- How often should I exercise?
- How long should I exercise at each session?
- What activity level should I target?
- Should I do more than one type of activity?
- What resources are available to me?
- How can I exercise in my home? In my neighborhood?
- Who can help me set up a safe exercise program?

### More Information

[Physical Activity and Cancer Risk](#) [3]

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

[Healthy Living After Cancer](#) [5]

## **Additional Resources**

[Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity: Physical Activity](#) [6]

[National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute: Guide to Physical Activity](#) [7]

[American Cancer Society: Physical Activity and the Cancer Patient](#) [8]

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### **Links**

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/survivorship/healthy-living/physical-activity-tips-survivors>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24995>

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

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24554>

[6] <http://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/index.html>

[7] [http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose\\_wt/phy\\_act.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/obesity/lose_wt/phy_act.htm)

[8] <http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorshipduringandaftertreatment/stayingactive/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient>