

Exercise During and After Cancer Treatment

If your doctor says it is safe, you can exercise during or after cancer treatment.

How routine exercise can help

Routine exercise can reduce fatigue (tiredness) and stress and improve bone and heart health, sleep and mood. Exercise can give you more energy, plus make you stronger and more flexible.

Getting started

- Talk to your doctor if you have questions, concerns or need help setting goals. Make a wellness plan for yourself. Invite family and friends to join you.
- Some exercise is better than none. If needed, start slowly. Each person has their own starting point and progress at their own pace.
- Use a fitness tracking device, like a pedometer, to keep track of how many steps you take each day. A good goal is walking 7,000-9,000 steps a day.
- Follow the safety guidelines on the next page.



Include in your exercise routine:

Aerobic activities

Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts - like brisk walking, swimming or riding a bike.

Goal - 30 to 60 minutes of activity, at least 3 to 5 days a week.

Muscle-strengthening activities

Activities that make your muscles work harder than usual, like free weights, therabands, or weight machines.

Goal - 2 sets of 12 to 15 repetitions, 2 times a week.

Don't forget to stretch! Do a few stretches before you exercise to help you stay flexible. Stretch muscles until you feel a tightness, hold for 10 to 30 seconds, and then relax.

Be safe!

- Do not exercise if you're not feeling well or if you have a fever. Do not exercise if you feel sick to your stomach (nausea), are throwing up or have pain that is not controlled with medicine.
- Stop exercising if it's hard to breathe, you have chest pain, or new or worsening pain elsewhere. Call 911 if you think any of these problems are a medical emergency.
- If you have swollen ankles, weight gain you cannot explain or feel short of breath when resting, call your doctor.
- If your immune system is weak, avoid public gyms until your white blood cell count returns to a safe level. Your doctor or nurse can tell you your white blood cell count.
- If you have peripheral neuropathy, which is pain, numbness or tingling in your hands and/or feet, a stationary bike may be safer than brisk walking.
- If you have a mediport or central line, avoid contact sports. Do not do activities that could bump or dislodge your port or line, such as playing baseball, basketball or tennis. Do not swim or do other water activities unless your doctor or nurse says it is ok.

Resources

- **Physical Medicine and Rehab doctors** can see patients for consultation and referral to services such as therapy and medical equipment. Call 216-844-5432 to learn more.
- **LIVESTRONG** at the YMCA – a 12-week program designed to help survivors improve strength and quality of life. Offered at little or no cost at YMCAs throughout Ohio. To learn more, call 1-855-220-7777, visit livestrong.org/ymca or call your local YMCA.
- **Strong Women, Strong Bones** – at the UH Landerbrook Women's Health Center. To learn more, call 216-831-8311.
- **The Gathering Place** – in Beachwood and Westlake. To learn more, call 216-595-9546.
- **Silver Sneakers** – free wellness program offered to people with certain Medicare plans. To learn more, call 1-866-584-7389 or visit silversneakers.com.
- **[Survivorship Care for Healthy Living](#)** – from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network. For a printable copy, visit nccn.org/patientguidelines

This info is a general resource. It is not meant to replace your doctor's advice. Ask your doctor or health care team any questions. Always follow their instructions.