
Being Active with Cancer

Benefits of exercise (before, during and after treatment):

- Maintains strength and quality of life.
- Improves immune system and response to treatments.
- Decreases depression, anxiety, and fatigue.
- Improves physical ability.
- Increases appetite.
- Improves bone health.
- Helps with sleep.

Note: Notify your provider as soon as you have any concerning changes.

To get started:

- Keep it simple, take your time and have fun!
- Do types of movement you enjoy.
- Be active every other day, if possible.
- Take breaks from sitting to move during your day (when sitting, stand up and move every hour; walk to the mailbox; take walks within your home)
- Break up the minutes of exercise each day. Build up to 30-minute sessions.
- Increase the length of time you do an activity before making it harder.
- Keep a log of your exercise and symptoms during and after exercise.

Goals:

- **Aerobic Exercise**
 - 150 minutes each week of moderate to intense aerobic activity or 75 minutes each week of vigorous activity.
 - Moderate to intense means you can talk, but not sing.
 - Vigorous means you can say a few words without pausing for a breath.
 - Avoid going above these levels.
- **Strength Training**
 - Two to three times per week of 10-15 repetitions of each exercise with two sets per session (10-15 repetitions = 1 set).

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- Examples of strength training include lifting weights, push movements (like push-ups), pull movements (like pull-ups), squats or using resistance bands.

Examples of Activities:

Walking	Bicycling	Strength Training	Tai-Chi
Seated Exercises	Kayaking	Yoga/Stretching	Qigong
Water Exercises	Gardening	Dancing	Golf

Remember to wear sunscreen if you are exercising outdoors!

Talk to your provider before exercising about:

- Infection or fever
- Low blood counts
- Severe discomfort
- Difficulty with movement or balance
- Sudden onset of pain
- Difficulty breathing
- Chest pain
- Irregular heartbeat
- Swelling
- Hernia
- Ostomy, feeding tube, or catheter

Additional Resources:

- Whole Health – physical and spiritual classes through the VA
- LiveStrong – small group exercise class for cancer survivors at the YMCA
- GeroFit – https://www.va.gov/GERIATRICS/pages/gerofit_Home.asp
- Ask your dietitian about other resources available at your VA (VA partnerships with local gyms, Be Active Classes, personal trainers or exercise physiologists, Rural Whole Health, and Recreational Therapy).

Ask your provider for a referral to Physical Therapy or Occupational Therapy to learn about more specific exercises for you and your goals.