

Staying active after a breast cancer diagnosis

This article highlights the importance of staying or getting active after a breast cancer diagnosis. Physical activity does not just reduce a woman's risk of breast cancer. Research shows that it can also improve outcomes and increase survival after diagnosis.¹ Almost any level of physical activity had some benefit for the survivors studied, but those who lived the longest met or exceeded physical activity guidelines.²

Evidence shows that exercise is safe and effective for cancer survivors. During treatment, the exercise goal is to maintain strength, endurance, and function. After treatment, the goal is to return to former levels of function – both physical and psychological.

People who were active reported:

- 👍 Less anxiety during treatment
- 👍 Less fatigue
- 👍 Fewer symptoms of depression
- 👍 Better quality of life
- 👍 Improved perceived physical function

What kind of exercise should I do with breast cancer?

A safe exercise regimen should be tailored to fit each person. Ask your oncologist to refer you to a cancer rehabilitation centre. You can also work with a qualified exercise professional. They can work with you to find out what activities best meet your needs.

Resources

Learn about physical activity before treatment, after surgery, or post-therapy from Dr. Kathryn Schmitz, a leading exercise oncology researcher:
<https://www.movingthroughcancer.com/move>

This booklet from the Canadian Cancer Society talks about exercises after breast cancer surgery:
<https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/exercises-after-breast-surgery>

Learn about tips to make physical activity a fun and safe part of your life with this Active Aging Canada brochure on 'Getting Active After Cancer Treatment':
https://www.activeagingcanada.ca/assets/pdf/cancer/consumer_brochure.pdf

References

1. McTiernan et al. *Physical Activity in Cancer Prevention and Survival: A Systematic Review*, *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*: Volume 51 - Issue 6 - p 1252-1261, 2019.
2. Cannioto et al. *Physical Activity Before, During, and After Chemotherapy for High-Risk Breast Cancer: Relationships with Survival*. *J Natl Cancer Inst.* Jan 4;113(1):54-63, 2021.