

It's Important to be Active!

The 5 Ws for Physical Activity After a Cancer Diagnosis

WHO?

Everyone. Physical activity is beneficial for everyone, regardless of age, sex, physical ability, or current fitness level. It is safe for most people to exercise before, during, and after cancer treatment.

Always remember to talk to your health care team before starting a new physical activity program, for help modifying a physical activity program, or if you are unsure of what activities are safe for you.

WHY?

Physical activity can help you feel better, regardless of where you are in your cancer journey.

Some of the benefits associated with physical activity include:

- Increased energy levels and reduced fatigue (tiredness)
- Improved sense of well-being and self-confidence
- Increased strength and flexibility
- Improved heart and bone health
- Improved quality of sleep
- Reduced stress and increased happiness
- Reduced feelings of anxiety and depression
- Reduced treatment-related side-effects, cancer recurrence, and cancer-specific mortality!¹



Did you know?
Any amount of exercise each day can help you feel better.

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

WHEN?

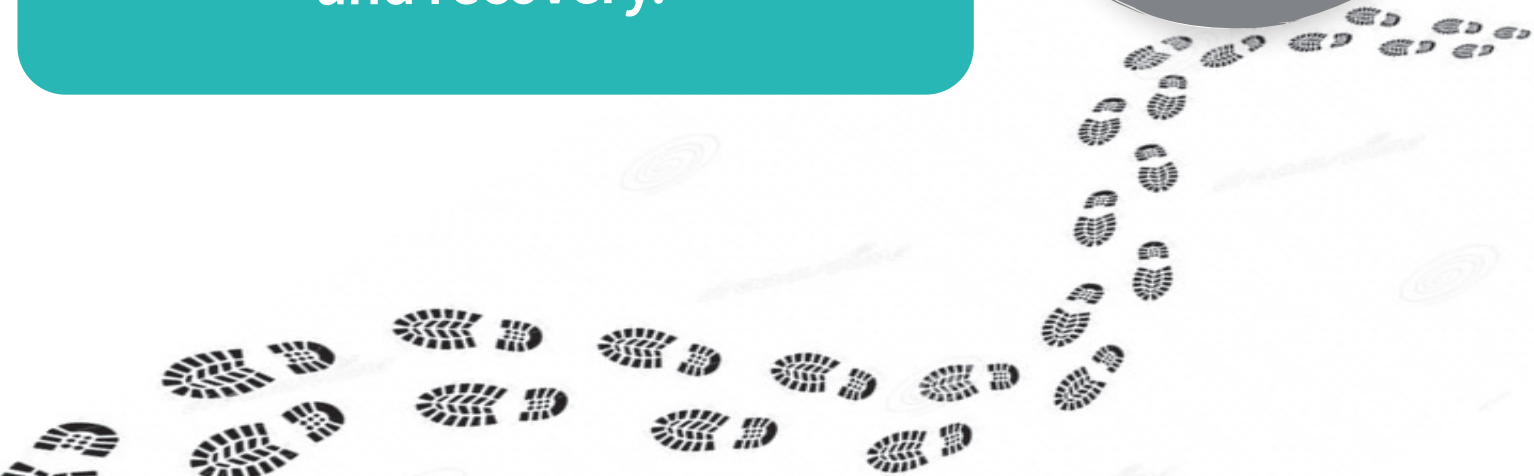
It is never too soon or too late in your treatment to start being physically active.

Tips to help you get started:

- Talk to your health care team before starting a new physical activity routine to determine activity types/levels that will be safe for you.
- Do activities that feel right for YOU.
 - › Choose activities that you enjoy.
 - › Choose an activity that feels comfortable depending on your current energy and fitness levels.
 - › Increase activities at your own pace.
- Choose to do different types of physical activity, this may be alone or with a group. Involving others in your activities may give you the support you need to keep going.
- Choose an activity that is not too easy or too hard; you should be able to talk but not sing while doing the exercise.
- Incorporate some activities that get your heart rate up and others that build your strength and flexibility.
- Any physical activity, even if it is only a couple of minutes a few times a day, is good for your body and can help you improve your health.

After a cancer diagnosis, being active is one of the most important things you can do to feel better throughout treatment and recovery.

Doing SOMETHING is always better than doing NOTHING!



WHAT?

Small steps add up
to BIG results!

The best types of activity are those that you ENJOY.

If you are not currently physically active:

- Start by incorporating light physical activity into your daily routine.
- Remember that even a few minutes a day is better than nothing!
 - › Take the stairs
 - › Park at the back of the lot
 - › Doing some stretching or light exercises while watching TV
 - › Stand while talking on the phone

If you are currently physically active:

- Adjust your activity routine to fit your current energy levels and physical abilities.
- Start small and slowly increase the amount and intensity of activities you're doing each day.

Always start with small goals that are attainable for YOU! Intensity and duration of activities can be increased as you feel comfortable.

“Patients who exercised following a diagnosis of cancer were observed to have a lower relative risk of cancer mortality and recurrence, and experienced fewer/less severe adverse effects.”¹

Types of Activity

Physical activity that helps your HEART:

- Gets your heart-rate up and makes you breathe faster.

Light Intensity	Moderate Intensity	High Intensity
Slow walking Slow biking Golfing Light housework Gardening	Brisk walking Faster biking Swimming Dancing Ball sports	Running/jogging Hiking Climbing stairs Race walking Competitive sports

Physical activity to help your MUSCLES and BONES:

- Improves your muscle strength.
- Can be done with:
 - › Free-weights (such as dumbbells, kettlebells, or barbells)
 - › Household items (such as soup cans or books)
 - › Resistance bands
 - › Your own body weight
- Strength training is often done in repetitions (reps) and sets
 - › Repetition: a single movement
 - › Set: a group or series of repetitions

Light Intensity	Moderate Intensity	High Intensity
Use a small amount of weight or resistance.	Gradually add more weight to make the exercise harder.	You are pushing yourself as hard as you can.
You should be able to comfortably perform many repetitions.	As you feel comfortable, increase the number of repetitions.	This should be done with a qualified exercise professional to make sure that you are doing the activity safely.
	For more of a challenge, increase the number of sets.	

Safety First!

Respect your pain and fatigue and **only do what feels comfortable.**

Warm-up

- Always include an appropriate warm up with light exercises before starting your physical activity
- For example, if walking, start at a slow pace to warm-up and gradually increase to your desired pace.



Cool-down

- Following activity, cool down with light exercises such as a slow walk and stretching.

Always STOP if:

- You feel dizzy, short of breath, or have chest pain.
- You experience new pain or more pain than usual.
- New or more swelling occurs in your arm(s) or leg(s).
- Your fatigue increases or energy decreases.
- You are sweating more than normal (for no apparent reason).

For help with physical activity, you can talk to:

- Your family doctor.
- Your cancer health care team.
- A physiotherapist, occupational therapist or a qualified exercise professional who is trained to work with people with cancer.
 - › Exercise professionals in Nova Scotia may have different names depending on their training (Clinical Exercise Physiologist, Registered Kinesiologist, etc.)
 - › Ask your exercise professional some questions about their experience in helping people with cancer:
 - What type of training or certifications do you have?
 - Do you have specific training for working with people with cancer?
 - Can you recommend a routine that is safe for me?

WHERE?

Physical activity can be done:

- At home
- Outside
- At a local gym, health centre, or recreational facility

Ask your health care team,
“Is there any person, group, or
class that can help me reach my
physical activity goals?”

Some hospitals and community organizations have group exercise programs specifically for people with cancer. Ask your health care team about options in your area or contact the Physical Activity and Cancer (PAC) Lab.

- › Email: EXCancer@nshealth.ca
- › Phone: 902-473-2035

1. Cormie, P., Zopf, E. M., Zhang, X., & Schmitz, K. H. (2017). The impact of exercise on cancer mortality, recurrence, and treatment-related adverse effects. *Epidemiologic reviews*, 39(1), 71-92.
2. Winett, R. A., & Carpinelli, R. N. (2001). Potential health-related benefits of resistance training. *Preventive medicine*, 33(5), 503-513.

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