Breast cancer survivorship: Exercise information

Why should I exercise?

Research shows that regular exercise offers important health benefits in cancer survivors!

- Improve mental health by reducing anxiety and depressive symptoms
- Improve physical health by improving physical function, bone health and sleep
- Reduce fatigue both during and after treatment for cancer
- Reduces risk of other chronic diseases, helps manage weight with a healthy diet

How much should I exercise?

- Any physical activity is better than none. Start by moving more and sitting less.
- Take it one day at a time by setting realistic goals for yourself, tracking them, and noting your progress over time.
- Start with low time and intensity goals then gradually add minutes over several weeks.
- To improve overall health, aim to achieve the current ACSM (American College of Sports Medicine) physical activity guidelines: 150 minutes a week (30 min x 5 days a week) of aerobic exercise, include strengthening exercises twice a week.
- Walking is a simple way to start being more active.

Is exercise safe for me?

- If you are new to exercise, talk with your treatment team before beginning an exercise program.
- It may help to meet with a physical therapist or exercise trainer to help get you started, especially if you are new to strengthening exercises.
- Does not cause or exacerbate lymphedema.
- A gentle yoga video is available on the Lifestyle Medicine site: massgeneral.org/cancer/lifestylemedicine
Let’s move! Get started and keep it going!

- **Set up for success**: collect the workout clothing, shoes and water bottle that you’ll need, put it out the night before if you plan to exercise in the morning.
- **Plan and schedule your exercise blocks**. Putting it on your calendar provides accountability.
- **Warm up before you start exercise** (march in place, jumping jacks, slow-moderate pace walking). Cool down after you finish exercise (slow walking, gentle stretching).
- **Make it fun and social!** Ask a friend or family member to join you, choose an exercise class you have always wanted to try, or make a playlist of your favorite songs.
- **Determine your “why”**. Defining why exercise matters to you provides motivation.
- **Be your best cheerleader**. A positive attitude is a powerful influence on behavior.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Light intensity</th>
<th>Moderate intensity</th>
<th>Vigorous intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>How much?</strong></td>
<td>Up to 30 minutes per session</td>
<td>30 minutes per session</td>
<td>20 minutes per session, 3 days a week</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>How often?</strong></td>
<td>As many days as you can</td>
<td>5 days a week</td>
<td>Strength training with weights, 2 days a week</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Walking</strong></td>
<td>Walk at a slow pace</td>
<td>Walk at a brisk pace</td>
<td>• Walk at a very brisk pace</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Running or jogging</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Other examples</strong></td>
<td>Light housework, gardening, gentle yoga</td>
<td>Vacuuming, raking, beginner ballroom dance, yoga, Zumba</td>
<td>Shoveling, bicycling, swimming, salsa dance, boot camp, interval training</td>
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</tbody>
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**Strength exercises:**

- Lifting weights (hand weight, dumbbell, bar bell, kettle bells, medicine ball)
- Body weight exercises (lunge, plank, squat, push up, pull up, bridge, step up)
- Resistance weight exercises (https://www.theraband.com/exercises)

**Web-based resources**

- [https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm#:~:text=Regular%20physical%20activity%20is%20one,ability%20to%20do%20everyday%20activities](https://www.cdc.gov/physicalactivity/basics/pa-health/index.htm#:~:text=Regular%20physical%20activity%20is%20one,ability%20to%20do%20everyday%20activities)
- [https://www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/recommendations/be-physically-active/](https://www.aicr.org/cancer-prevention/recommendations/be-physically-active/)
- [https://www.livestrong.org/what-we-do/program/livestrong-at-the-ymca](https://www.livestrong.org/what-we-do/program/livestrong-at-the-ymca)