DANA-FARBER/BRIGHAM AND WOMEN'S CANCER CENTER

Exercise and Breast Cancer

Exercise offers far-reaching benefits for cancer survivors. It can help reduce fatigue, increase energy, improve quality of life, and even help with certain side effects of treatment. Research shows that exercise can be safe both during and after cancer treatment. We encourage all patients to live an active lifestyle.

How much exercise should I get?

Depending on your age, previous exercise experience, energy levels, side effects from treatment, and other health concerns, exercise recommendations may vary. **Please talk with your physician *before* beginning an exercise program**. You may need a personalized exercise plan if you have: extreme fatigue, osteoporosis, or peripheral neuropathies. Some general recommendations from the American Cancer Society and American College of Sports Medicine:

- **Every week**, get **150 minutes of moderate intensity activity** or **75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity**
- Exercise for **at least 10 minutes per session,** preferably spread throughout the week
- Aim for **at least two weekly sessions** of strength training

Start your exercise routine under the supervision of a physical therapist, exercise physiologist, or certified personal trainer. To find a **Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer** in your area, visit **http://certification.acsm.org**, click on "Find a Pro," and select "ACSM/ACS Certified Cancer Exercise Trainer" in the dropdown menu on the search page.

Types of exercise

Aerobic Exercise • Walking • Running • Biking • Swimming	**Benefits** • Increased energy • Improved mood • Improved blood sugar control • Improved cholesterol • Weight management/loss • Decreased blood pressure • Decreased risk of osteoporosis • Reduced risk of developing heart disease
Strength Training • Weightlifting • Bodyweight exercises	**Benefits** • Increased lean body mass • Increased bone health
Flexibility Training • Stretching • Yoga/Pilates	**Benefits** • More relaxed • Improved mood

Research studies that show exercise benefits

Some studies suggest that breast cancer survivors who exercise after a cancer diagnosis may have lower rates of recurrence and live longer than survivors who don't exercise. Although we don't know if these differences are due to the exercise these women performed, better survival in women who exercise has now been seen in many studies, including:

NURSES' HEALTH STUDY

- Nurses' Health Study data revealed women who participated in moderate exercise (such as walking at an average pace) for 3-5 hours/week had a **50 percent lower risk of breast cancer recurrence, breast cancer death, and death from any cause.**

COLLABORATIVE WOMEN'S LONGEVITY STUDY

- Collaborative Women's Longevity Study reported women who participated in moderate physical exercise several hours per week had a **50 percent lower risk of death**, either breast cancer-specific or due to other causes.

H.E.A.L. STUDY

- The Health, Eating, Activity, and Lifestyle (HEAL) study demonstrated that women who increased their physical activity levels after a breast cancer diagnosis had a **45 percent lower risk of death.**

W.H.E.L. STUDY

- The Women's Healthy Eating and Living (WHEL) study reported that women who walked for 30 minutes, six days a week, and consumed five or more portions of fruits and vegetables had a **survival advantage of 50 percent** compared to women who did not follow such healthy habits.

Examples of moderate intensity physical activity

- Water aerobics for 30 minutes
- Walking 1 mile in 20 minutes
- Biking 5 miles in 30 minutes

Still have questions?

For more information or to make an appointment with Dana-Farber exercise physiologist Nancy Campbell, call **617-632-4LAD (Life After Diagnosis)** or email **dfci_adultsurvivors@dfci.harvard.edu**. Learn more online at **www.dana-farber.org/exercise**.

This document is for informational purposes only. The content is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always seek the advice of your physician or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have regarding a medical condition.