

# Exercise and Colorectal Cancer

*Exercise has 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
- Reduces the 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

## Adult Survivorship Program

a member of the LIVESTRONG Survivorship Center of Excellence Network

## Moderate Exercise

- Ballroom and line dancing
- Canoeing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, volleyball, softball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Walking briskly
- Water aerobics

## Vigorous Exercise

- Biking faster than 10 miles/hour
- Aerobic/fast dancing
- Heavy gardening (digging, hoeing)
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Jogging or running
- Sports with a lot of running (basketball, hockey, soccer)
- Swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)

Source: [www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/factSheetAdults.aspx](http://www.health.gov/PAGuidelines/factSheetAdults.aspx)

## Is it 'moderate' or 'vigorous' exercise?

A great way to tell the difference between whether you are engaging in **moderate** or **vigorous** exercise is to see how your body is responding to the activity.

- **Moderate:** If you still have the ability to hold a conversation while engaging in a particular exercise, that exercise would generally be considered moderate.
- **Vigorous:** If you are only able to say one or two words due to shortness of breath, that exercise would generally be considered vigorous.

---

## Research studies that show exercise benefits

Studies suggest that colorectal cancer survivors who exercise after a cancer diagnosis may **have lower rates of colorectal cancer recurrence and live longer** than survivors who don't exercise.

- In three studies conducted at the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center, colorectal cancer survivors had up to a **50 percent reduction in the risk of cancer recurrence and improvement in survival.**
- Researchers asked survivors how much exercise they performed and then followed them over time. Although we don't know if these differences are definitely due to exercise, **exercise has been shown to provide multiple health benefits, including cardiovascular benefits.**

## 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](mailto:dfci_adultsurvivors@dfci.harvard.edu)**. Learn more online at **[www.dana-farber.org/exercise](http://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.*