



# NACER

*National Association of Cancer  
Exercise Rehabilitation*

## **Exercise after Cancer Diagnosis**

### **Why exercise?**

Research suggests that physical exercise improves both the physical and psychological distress experienced by cancer treatment and rehabilitation. These benefits include :

- Decreased fatigue
- Improved functional capacity
- Increased muscular strength
- Improved self-concept
- Increased vigour
- Decreased anxiety and depression

Extensive research evidence also indicates that maintaining an active lifestyle can :

- Help you feel more energetic
- Help improve your health
- Help you feel better
- Reduce isolation
- Provide opportunities for social contact / support

### **How much exercise is appropriate**

Your initial aim should be to establish a regular pattern of exercise. Try to build short bouts of moderate exercise into your daily routine. Start off gradually and aim to achieve 30 minutes of accumulated exercise over the period of most days of the week. Try to build these short bouts of exercise into more continuous periods of exercise over time.

Your activity programme should be fun and involve exercises you enjoy and are comfortable with. Try to exercise with a friend or a buddy.

If you feel especially tired from treatment on any given day, you could try exercising for less time, at a lower intensity than usual, or plan to exercise the next day.

### **Physical Activity recommendations :**

**Mode :** Select a form of exercise you enjoy. The most common exercises are walking, light jogging and biking. Always warm-up with gentle mobility and stretching exercises before you start your workout and complete a gradual cool-down once you have finished your session. If possible try to incorporate some conditioning and muscle strengthening exercises into your activity programme by doing some resistance training such as weights, press ups or squats.

**Frequency :**

**Stage 1** Aim to accumulate 30 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity over the course of most days of the week.

**Stage 2** 3-5 x 20 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity

**Intensity** Try to perform these activities at a moderate intensity.  
Moderate intensity activity is described as that which raises the heart rate enough to make you feel warm and slightly out of breath, though an individual should still be able to talk without being too breathless or around 60% of maximum heart rate (220 beats per minute - age).

**Duration :** Performing the activity for 20 to 30 minutes should be your goal, but shorter bouts (5-10 minutes) accumulated throughout the day is beneficial if you are finding it too difficult.

**Safe Practice**

Listen to your body when exercising because each person responds differently to exercise and to cancer treatment. Watch your body signals to know if you should stop exercising during your cancer treatment. Stop exercising if you notice any of the following signs either during or immediately following exercise and inform the class instructor.

- an irregular pulse
- joint or bone pain
- leg pain or cramps
- chest pain
- sudden onset of nausea
- dizziness, blurred vision, fainting
- difficulty breathing numbness or loss of feeling in hands or feet

Chemotherapy can cause a range of side effects and exercise is not recommended when Neutropenic (low neutrophil count) or Anemic (low red cell count). Always discuss your intention to exercise with your medical care team.

If you have any questions you can contact:

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For further information visit [www.nacer.org.uk](http://www.nacer.org.uk)