LET’S GET PHYSICAL:
THE ROLE OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY IN COLON CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

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Top 5 questions

1. Exercise for people with cancer?
2. Is exercise safe?
3. Will exercise reduce the risk of cancer coming back?
4. What counts as exercise?
5. How do I get started?
Question 1
Exercise? For people with cancer?
Do we need to promote exercise?

Physical Activity helps to:

- Improves mood & feel in control
- Reduces cancer related fatigue
- Reduces Chemo brain
- Improves range of movement
- Restores aerobic capacity
- Increases muscle strength & size
- Healthy body weight
- Increases bone density
- Improves control & function of pelvic floor
- Makes ADL’s easier
- Improves balance
- Improves quality of life

*Statements are evidence based*
Trajectory: Exercise & Cancer Research

- Safety
- Psycho-social Outcomes
- Physiological Outcomes
  - Specific side effects
  - Optimal prescription
  - Health in Survivorship

1980’s  1990’s  2000’s  2010’s  Future

Implementation

Guidelines
American College of Sports Medicine Roundtable on Exercise Guidelines for Cancer Survivors

Schmitz K et al. Med Sci Sport Ex 2010; 2(7):1409-26
ACSM Guidelines

• “Avoid inactivity”

• “Return to daily activities as soon as possible after surgery”

• “Continue normal activities and exercise as much as possible during and after non-surgical treatment”

• “Recommendations are the same as age-appropriate guidelines...” for Americans

Canadian Physical Activity Guidelines

FOR ADULTS - 18 – 64 YEARS

Guidelines

To achieve health benefits, adults aged 18-64 years should accumulate at least 150 minutes of moderate- to vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity per week, in bouts of 10 minutes or more.

It is also beneficial to add muscle and bone strengthening activities using major muscle groups, at least 2 days per week.

More physical activity provides greater health benefits.
There is a drop in physical activity following diagnosis
Meeting the PA Guidelines?

Despite the evidence supporting the benefits of exercise, very few cancer survivors are currently meeting the PA guidelines

• **10% during treatment** (Rock et al, 2012)
• **20-30% after treatments** (Rock et al, 2012)
• **<15% prostate cancer survivors** (Galvao et al 2015)
• **<35% breast cancer survivors** (Phillips et al 2012)

**150 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity per week & 2 resistance training sessions**
Question 2
Is exercise safe?
Research now suggests that exercise is safe for cancer survivors, during and after treatment.

But there are some exceptions...
Check with your doctor

You will need to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. This is true even if you exercised regularly before being diagnosed. After your doctor has said it’s okay, you might also meet with a physical therapist or another healthcare professional with experience in this area. They can help you develop an exercise program that is safe, effective and fun for you.

Although exercise is safe for many people, there are some exceptions. For example, if you’re at risk for infection or anemia you may not be able to exercise. This is why you need to talk to your doctor before starting.

Safety precautions

Some general safety precautions for people with cancer include:

- Don’t exercise if you have anemia or if mineral levels in your blood, such as sodium or potassium, are not normal.

- Avoid public places, such as gyms, if you have low white blood cell counts or a weakened immune system.

- Avoid uneven surfaces or any weight-bearing exercises that could cause falls or injury.

- If you have osteoporosis, arthritis, nerve damage or cancer that has spread to the bone, do not use heavy weights or exercise that puts too much stress on the bones.

- Avoid swimming pools if you are receiving radiation therapy as chlorine can irritate skin in the treatment area.
What is recommended for cancer survivors?

- “Be as active as possible during treatment and recovery”
- “Try exercising when you have the most energy”
- “Some individuals may require modifications and may require greater supervision for safety.”
Question 3
Will exercise reduce the risk of cancer coming back?
Research on Recurrence? Survival?

- Few studies available
- All observational
- Difficult to assess
Physical activity

Increased physical activity

Meyerhardt et al. JCO 2006; 24(22) 3527-3534
We may know more in the future

**CHALLENGE TRIAL**

962 participants
42 Centres around the world

Usual Lifestyle vs. Exercise Support Intervention
*For 3 years*

Follow at 3, 5 and 10 years

First 250 participants:
- Increase in physical activity levels
- Improved physical fitness, muscle strength/endurance & agility

Bottom Line

- Some evidence from observational studies

- More research needed
  - Cancer type, stage
  - Other factors

- Exercise lowers your risk of other chronic diseases
Question 4
What counts as exercise or physical activity?
Activities “count” as exercise or PA if:

- Causes your heart to beat a little harder
- Causes you to breath a little faster
- For at least 10 minutes blocks
Moderate Intensity?

- **Talk Test:**
  - Can *talk in full sentences* without getting short of breath, you are working at a safe level.
  - Can *sing*....maybe too easy
  - *Can not talk* in full sentences....too hard!

- This is “moderate” physical activity
Question 5
How do I get started?
General Advice to get started

• Talk to your doctor

• Start slow. Start with something simple like walking and slowly increase how often and how long you walk.

• Try to exercise a little or do some type of activity each day, even if you are feeling unwell. Sometimes just a few minutes of gentle stretching can make you feel better.

• If you don’t have the energy to exercise for a long period of time, break it up into a few shorter sessions throughout the day.
Who can you ask?

Unsure how to SAFELY be physically active during and after cancer treatments?

Call 8-1-1

Qualified exercise professionals with cancer-specific training now at HealthLink BC

Just a phone call away
Physical Activity Services for cancer at HealthLink BC are free and can help you to:

- Start exercising **safely**
- Understand how to use physical activity to **reduce and manage** treatment side effects
- Develop an **individualized** physical activity plan

Call **8-1-1**

Ask for Physical Activity Services for cancer

**Hours:** Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

[www.healthlinkbc.ca/physicalactivity](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca/physicalactivity)
How do I keep it up?

• Make a plan

• Then make a plan on how to stick to the plan

• Use goals to stay motivated

• Choose the right exercise for you

• Find and overcome your exercise roadblocks

• Call Healthlink BC again!
http://walkbc.ca/
Who else can help?

- Concerned about other aches and pains slowing you down:
  - “Find a Physio” link at www.bcphysio.org ("oncology")

- Want to find someone to work with in the community?
  - ACSM Certified Cancer Exercise Specialist OR ACSM Certified Exercise Specialist or Trainer (American College of Sports Medicine)
  - CSEP Certified Exercise Physiologist or CSEP Certified Personal Trainer (Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology)
A new type of prescription
Take home messages

• Physical activity has many health benefits

• More research needed to understand the role in reducing risk of cancer recurrence

• Some exercise is better than none

• Move more!