

You may be concerned that you are not moving around as well as you like following the diagnosis or treatment for cancer. Things like walking, climbing stairs, lifting things may feel harder to you now. Some of these limitations may be temporary and some might be more long-lasting. Either way, it is important that you talk to your doctor if you are concerned that you are not moving around as well as you like. There are some things that you can do to stay active that will help you feel better both physically and mentally.

Exercise or physical activity can be an important part of improving your physical and emotional health during and after treatment. It is important to set realistic goals based on your treatment schedule, time available, how you feel on any given day, and other factors. By making exercise a priority and setting reasonable goals, you can feel stronger, sleep better, and improve your mood.

Remember that you don't need to run a marathon. Some days even sitting in a chair instead of lying in bed will be as much activity as you can do. Cleaning the house, walking the dog, or stretching are also forms of exercise. Recent information shows that physical activity may even lower the chance of your cancer coming back.

**Having an exercise program tailored to your level of energy and ability can help you take control of your physical and mental health. It can also help you:**

- Keep or improve your physical abilities
- Improve balance and lower risk of falls or broken bones
- Improve blood flow and lower risk of blood clots
- Improve self-esteem
- Improve sexual functioning
- Lower risk of anxiety and depression
- Reduce impact from side effects such as nausea and fatigue
- Lower risk of heart disease and osteoporosis
- Improve sleep
- Prevent or improve "chemobrain"
- Maintain a healthy weight

Before you resume or start a new exercise program you should talk with your doctor.



[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)  
1-888-793-9355



## CUSTOMIZE YOUR EXERCISE PLAN

Customized exercise is about changing an exercise movement to fit how you feel on a given day, to accommodate for any physical or other limitation you may have. You will feel very different on any given day during or after you complete treatment than you will months or a few years later. You can still exercise at any point during that time, but the way that you exercise should look different. At first you might walk very slowly from the couch to the mailbox and back. A month later, you might have the energy to walk slowly around the block. A year later, you might walk around the block 4 times.

Activities such as cleaning or gardening also count as exercise. You may not feel physical exertion, but that effort is still good for you, no matter how small. The following suggestions will help you “read” how you feel at any given moment, and then customize your chosen exercise to match your feeling.

For example:

- If you feel sick, exercise may help decrease nausea. Exercise when you feel sick should be gentle, slow and brief.
- If you are fatigued or extremely tired, exercise may give you energy (if it is gentle, slow and brief). You can always do more on a day when you are not so tired.
- If you are not sleeping well at night, exercise during the day may help you sleep better.

Here are 4 steps you can take to make a personalized plan for making sure you are physically active:

### STEP 1: GET STARTED WITH SOMETHING YOU LIKE

- Talk to your doctor about any possible restrictions on your physical activity
- Set short-term and long-term goals
- Ask for support from others, or get friends, family, and co-workers to exercise with you
- Reward yourself when you reach your goals
- Start slowly and pace yourself

### STEP 2: KEEP GOING

- The goal is to find a way to do some form of activity, rather than nothing at all
- Adjust your exercise to match your energy level; some days you will be able to do more than others
- Determine the amount of time and effort you can put into physical activity each day

### STEP 3: NOTICE HOW YOU FEEL

- While you exercise, take a moment to notice if you are working too hard
- If you can talk in full sentences without getting short of breath, you are working at a safe level

### STEP 4: ACE YOUR WORKOUT

After finishing your workout, use this test to decide whether you aced your workout. When you ACE your workout, you will feel:

- **A**lert—mentally
- **C**alm—emotionally
- **E**nergized—physically

If you feel mentally tired, emotionally upset, or physically exhausted, you probably did too much (in an unhealthy way). If you just feel bored or uninspired, you probably didn't do enough. When you ACE your workout, you will feel better afterward than when you started. That's part of the magic of exercise. Exercise can make you feel better, even if you felt nauseated, exhausted, or sad before you did it. You can control feeling better afterward by customizing your exercise movements to match how your body is doing on any given day.

To learn more about the benefits of exercise and maintain an exercise plan, visit [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/exercise-wellness](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/exercise-wellness).

# General Cancer Information, Survivorship & Support

**Cancer Support Community** • 888-793-9355 • [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org)

**American Cancer Society** • 800-227-2345 • [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)

**CancerCare** • 800-813-4673 • [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org)

**Cancer.net** • 888-651-3038 • [www.cancer.net](http://www.cancer.net)

**Caregiver Action Network** • 855-227-3640 • [www.caregiveraction.org](http://www.caregiveraction.org)

**Healthcare.gov** • [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov)

**Livestrong Foundation** • 866-673-7205 • [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org)

**National Cancer Institute** • 800-422-6237 • [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov)

**National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine** • 888-644-6226 • [www.nccam.nih.gov](http://www.nccam.nih.gov)

**Patient Advocate Foundation** • 800-532-5274 • [www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org)

## CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY RESOURCES

The Cancer Support Community's (CSC) resources and programs are available free of charge. Call 888-793-9355 or visit [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org) for more info.

**Cancer Support Helpline**<sup>®</sup>—Have questions, concerns or looking for resources? Call CSC's toll-free Cancer Support Helpline (888-793-9355), available in 200 languages Mon–Fri, 9 am–9 pm ET.

**Open to Options**<sup>®</sup>—Preparing for your next appointment? Our trained specialists can help you create a list of questions to share with your doctor. Make an appointment by calling 888-793-9355 or by contacting your local CSC or Gilda's Club.

**Frankly Speaking About Cancer**<sup>®</sup>—Trusted information for cancer patients and their loved ones is available through publications, online, and in-person programs.

[www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FranklySpeakingAboutCancer).

**Services at Local CSCs and Gilda's Clubs**—With the help of 170 locations, CSC and Gilda's Club affiliates provide services free of charge to people touched by cancer. Attend support groups, educational sessions, wellness programs, and more at a location near you. [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/FindLocation).

**MyLifeLine**—CSC's private, online community allows patients and caregivers to easily connect with friends and family to receive social, emotional, and practical support throughout the cancer journey and beyond. Connect with other caregivers by joining the Caregiver Support online discussion board. Sign up at [www.MyLifeLine.org](http://www.MyLifeLine.org).

**Grassroots Network**—Make sure your voice is heard by federal and state policy makers on issues affecting cancer patients and survivors by joining our Network at [www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate](http://www.CancerSupportCommunity.org/become-advocate).

**Cancer Experience Registry**<sup>®</sup>—Help others by sharing your cancer patient or cancer caregiver experience via survey at [www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org](http://www.CancerExperienceRegistry.org).

The Cancer Support Community provides this information as a service. This publication is not intended to take the place of medical care or the advice of your doctor. We strongly suggest consulting your doctor or other health care professionals to answer questions and learn more.

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