



FATIGUE

Cancer-related fatigue is the most common side effect of cancer and cancer treatment. Over 80 percent of people with cancer feel cancer-related fatigue. Cancer and cancer treatments kill both cancer cells and healthy cells, so your body is working harder than normal to heal.

“*Fatigue is being tired – physically, mentally and emotionally. It means having less energy to do the things you need or want to do. The fatigue that comes with cancer, called cancer-related fatigue, is different from the fatigue of daily life.*”

American Cancer Society

WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL BETTER?
Exercise!

It may sound strange, but too much rest will make your fatigue worse. Exercise helps by:

- reducing swelling in the body
- making your muscles stronger
- improving brain function and mood
- reducing disability



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CANCER RELATED FATIGUE

PHYSICAL THERAPY DEPARTMENT, REHABILITATION SERVICES

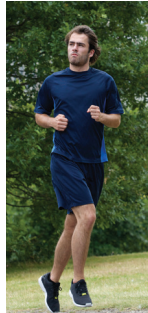


WHAT KIND OF EXERCISE CAN I DO?

Aerobic Exercise

What is it?

Aerobic exercise is any movement you keep up such as walking, jogging, swimming or cycling. It is designed to work out your heart and lungs to make them stronger and improve your body's use of oxygen.



How do I start?

If you are not exercising regularly, you should start with a "moderate" level (see chart on next page) of physical activity of your choice such as walking, swimming or riding a bike. Start with 10 to 15 minutes a day, three days a week and progress slowly to 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

Note: Always make sure you get cleared by your doctor before starting an exercise program, especially if you have heart or lung issues.

Resistance Exercise

What is it?

Resistance exercise is movement that makes your muscles work against force such as free weights, bands, body weight or exercise machines. It is designed to make your skeletal (not heart and lungs) muscles stronger.

How do I start?

Do resistance exercise at least two times a week with at least one rest day in between. Refer to the chart in the next section to find out how to gauge the intensity of your workout. In general, you want to be able to do two sets of eight repetitions using weight you can lift with "moderate" effort.



HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM EXERCISING AT A SAFE LEVEL?

Use the Borg scale on the right to see how hard you are working. Aim to stay at 3 or 4.

Moderate intensity (3-4) exercise will feel like you can still talk in full sentences while exercising, but your breathing is faster.

BE SAFE: When should I stop exercising?

- You feel severe pain or shooting pain down your back and legs
- You have chest pain or palpitations with a feeling like your heart is beating too fast
- You are too out of breath or unable to catch up on your breathing
- You feel dizzy or lightheaded
- You have cold sweats
- You see bruising or bleeding from your nose or mouth during exercise
- You hear something "pop" like you pulled a muscle

1	At rest
2	Very easy
3	Moderate — can talk easily
4	More purposeful — breathing is faster
5	Starting to become warm — sporadic conversation
6	Challenging but sustainable for 20 min +
7	Very challenging — short sentences only
8	Very tough — one word answers only
9	Almost flat out
10	Absolute limit — maximum heart rate, only sustainable for a few seconds

WHAT CAN I DO IF I CANNOT EXERCISE?



Exercise may be the last thing on your mind and can seem impossible to do on some days. Here are some tips to care for yourself when you feel you cannot exercise:

- **Keep an exercise diary:** Each day record the type of exercise you do (e.g., walking, swimming, biking, elliptical), how long you do it for (e.g., 15 minutes, 1 hour), and anything you noticed during exercise (e.g., I felt more tired exercising in the afternoon today; I was able to walk half a mile longer than yesterday). This will help you find the best time to try to exercise, stay on track and see your progress.
- **Choose what really needs to be done:** Every day, choose the tasks that are most important to you. You may not finish what you want to in a day's worth of time. It's OK to ask for help and allow other people to take care of you.
- **Work at peak energy levels:** Plan your day so that exercise and other tasks that you need more energy for are done during hours when you feel the most alert and driven.
- **Take rest breaks:** Set aside times throughout the day when you have to rest in between tasks. This will keep you from doing more than your body can handle at once and help you feel better when you are physically active.
- **Sleep right:** Lack of sleep or too much sleep can increase fatigue. Don't have caffeine or exercise late at night as this can keep you awake. Only stay in bed when you are sleeping.
- **Eat right:** Getting the right amount of nutrition from vegetables, fruits and meats is vital so that your body stays healthy and strong. Ask your nutritionist for more information on how to have a balanced diet.