

# Exercise Guidelines

## Cancer related fatigue and exercise:

Decreased physical activity, which may be the result of illness or of treatment, can lead to tiredness and lack of energy. Even healthy athletes forced to spend extended periods in bed or sitting in chairs develop feelings of anxiety, depression, weakness, fatigue, and nausea. Regular moderate exercise can prevent these feelings, and help a person feel energetic and stay active.

There are many benefits to a regular exercise program during chemotherapy, which include an increase in appetite as well as increased resistance to fatigue. Many people with cancer who participate in an exercise program, say they feel better and more energetic. They also report fewer side effects from their treatment.

## Benefits of exercise:

- Lifts depression and self-esteem
- Increases energy
- Increases strength and endurance
- Strengthens muscles and bones
- Improves appetite
- Enhances restful nighttime sleep
- Enhances coordination
- Strengthens heart

## General exercise guidelines:

- **TYPES OF EXERCISE:** Aside from exercise like walking, yoga, bike riding, or swimming, other activities such as active housecleaning or gardening can count towards exercise. If possible, exercise with a partner who can help motivate you. Taking regular walks is an excellent form of exercise that does not require special equipment and almost everyone can do.
- **FREQUENCY OF EXERCISE:** Ideally you should try to exercise at least 3-4 times per week. You do not necessarily need to be in a rigorous or structured program of exercise; simply walking a few times a week is good exercise. Realize that developing a habit of exercise takes time.
- **LENGTH OF EXERCISE:** You may need to start out with only 5 minutes at a time and slowly work your way up to a comfortable exercise level for you. Use your own judgment and how you are feeling to guide you. The duration of exercise varies from person to person.
- **AVOID:** You should never feel faint, dizzy, exhausted, or short of breath when exercising. If this happens, you are working too hard and should slow down. Avoid exercising outdoors in very cold or very warm weather. Consider walking in an air-conditioned mall or shopping center.

## Exercise guidelines while on chemotherapy:

- Take it easy the day of your chemotherapy. Postpone exercising until another day.
- If you have an infection or a fever, wait until you feel better. Begin slowly.
- Avoid crowded public places such as health clubs, public pools, or gyms when your white blood count is low
- Do not exercise without permission from your physician if your platelet count is below 50,000
- If you have metastatic bone involvement, consult your physician about low-impact exercises