

Chapter 11. My General Health

Your body will undergo many changes and stresses during your treatment and recovery period. Leading a healthy lifestyle and knowing what to expect will help make your journey easier.

Wellness and Exercise

There's a lot we don't know about prostate cancer, but mounting evidence suggests that exercise may reduce the risk of cancer reoccurring and make a real difference in survival. Exercise can be a special tool at your disposal to empower you. Exercise enhances well-being and makes you feel good. It is a tonic for the mind and body and can help you avoid or reverse weight gain. Even moderate amounts of regular exercise – a half hour walk every day or a few laps in the pool – can make a difference to your physical and emotional health.

Exercise Tips

- Exercise for at least two, but preferably four, hours a week. You can start with 20 minutes of walking, biking, swimming or using a treadmill. These are continuous movement aerobic exercises that improve mood, reduce hot flashes, prevent constipation, improve cardiovascular fitness and promote sleep.
- Carry a water bottle when exercising and drink plenty of water. Wear comfortable shoes, and be aware of posture and breathing. Start slowly and gradually build up your duration and intensity.
- Consult with your doctor before starting vigorous exercise regimens if you are undergoing chemotherapy, or have just had prostate surgery, or radiation treatment.

Nutrition

Good nutrition is a vital part of cancer treatment. Healthy eating can improve your strength and energy levels, increase tolerance of side effects, help to maintain a healthy weight, decrease risk of infection and promote healing. Eating the right foods before, during and after treatment is important for recovery. Be aware that your treatment plan may affect your appetite.

Basic Dietary Guidelines

- **Eat less fat:** A low-fat diet is a safe, proactive step you can take to improve your health. Avoid saturated fats, polyunsaturated, partially hydrogenated, and hydrogenated oils, and transfats. Choose monounsaturated fats, like olive oil and canola oil. Decrease your intake of meat, and emphasize lean poultry and wild salmon, which is rich in omega-3 fatty acids. Dairy products should be non-fat with no hormones added.
- **Control caloric intake:** Fat-free does not mean calorie free. Decrease your intake of refined carbohydrates, such as candy, cakes, juices and sodas. Your scale is the best indicator of whether you are eating too many or too few calories.
- **Eat fiber rich foods:** Eat 25 to 35 grams a day of fiber from whole grains, oats, wheat, barley, rye, beans and/or legumes. Look for cereal that contains more than five grams per serving of fiber. Increase your fiber intake slowly to prevent bloating.
- **Eat fruit and vegetables:** Strive to eat a wide variety of five fruits and five vegetables per day, especially broccoli, cabbage and cauliflower. These foods are rich in antioxidants and phytochemicals, which may help strengthen your immune system.
- **Eat adequate protein during treatment:** Protein is the building block of your cells and vital for the repair of healthy tissue damaged during treatment. Excellent protein sources include

non-fat and hormone-free dairy products, skinless poultry and fish. Balance is the key.

Water and Health

Drinking enough water is essential to health. Eight to 10 glasses of water a day is recommended for keeping the body well-hydrated and for preventing constipation. You must drink more water to replace the water you lose if you exercise, sweat, have hot flashes, night sweats, a fever, diarrhea or vomiting. Check your urine color. If you are drinking enough water, it should be a pale yellow and not a concentrated dark yellow. Good fluids to keep you hydrated include water, herbal tea, non-fat milk and diluted fruit juices. Coffee, black tea, chocolate, hi-fat foods and caffeinated soda can cause you to become dehydrated. Drink alcohol in very limited amounts, if at all (one to two alcoholic drinks per week).

Osteoporosis

Osteoporosis is a condition characterized by a decrease in bone mass and density. This causes the bones to become more fragile and increases the risk of hip and other fractures. Men who have been treated for prostate cancer may be at increased risk for osteoporosis if they have received hormone or chemotherapy.

Osteoporosis Risk Factors

- Family history of the disease
- Low calcium intake
- Lack of physical activity
- Smoking
- Excessive alcohol intake

Management Strategies

- **Nutrition:** A well-balanced diet rich in calcium and vitamin D is important. Talk to your doctor about calcium supplements and whether you need them to meet your daily calcium requirement.
- **Exercise:** The best exercises for your bones are weight-bearing exercises that force you to work against gravity, such as walking, stair-climbing and dancing.
- **Smoking and alcohol:** Smoking is bad for bones, as well as the heart and lungs. Smokers may actually absorb less calcium from their diets. Alcohol can also negatively affect bone health. People who drink heavily are more prone to bone loss and fracture.
- **Bone density testing:** Bone mineral density (BMD) tests measure bone density in various sites of the body. These tests can detect osteoporosis before a fracture occurs. They can also predict your chance of having a fracture in the future.
- **Medication:** There is no cure for osteoporosis. However, medications are available for the prevention and treatment of the disease. For more information, contact the National Institutes of Health, Osteoporosis and Related Bone Diseases National Resource Center at 1-800-624-BONE or OsteoInfo@oste.org.

Follow-Up Care

It is very important to go to all scheduled follow-up appointments once your treatment is complete. Your doctor will perform a physical exam, ask you about any problems or symptoms, and order laboratory or imaging tests as needed. You should never hesitate to tell your doctor about any symptoms or side effects you have, especially those that concern you.

Your follow-up appointments will probably be scheduled for every three to four months in the beginning. The longer you are cancer free, the fewer appointments you need. After five years of being cancer free, you will probably see your doctor only once a year.

The information in this section is not meant to replace the individual attention, advice, and treatment plan of your oncologist and medical team.