



Advising Your Patient on Being Active

Considerations Based on Treatment Type

The following are considerations for exercise prescription based on cancer type. It is important, however, to be aware of significant individual variation and assess each patient's specific needs before prescribing physical activity.

	Side Effects	Exercise Considerations
Chemotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significant reductions in physical performance ¹ • Increased fatigue ² • Low bone mineral density, increases risk for fractures ³ • Suppressed immune function ³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being active can reduce the loss in physical performance¹, however, patients should be warned to start slow and gradually build up as they feel comfortable. • Patients who were previously active should be cautious when engaging in the same level of activity as they were previously able to do. They may need to reduce the intensity and duration. • Activity has been shown to be better than pharmaceuticals when it comes to reducing cancer-related fatigue.² • Patients should be cautious when performing high impact activities or exercises involving trunk flexion.³ • In moderation, exercise has been shown to improve immunity.³ • Remind patients to exercise in a clean environment.
Radiation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dehydration ³ • Blistering and tightening of the skin near site of radiation ³ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress the importance of staying hydrated before, during, and after activity. • Patients should be cautious when engaging in activities or stretches that might irritate their site of radiation. Heavy sweating near the site of radiation may also be uncomfortable for some patients.

	Side Effects	Exercise Considerations
Surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muscle, nerve, and tissue damage ³ <p>Lymphedema ³</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise is an effective way to rebuild muscle tissue and accelerate healing in other tissues. Patients should be cautious when using muscles near the site of surgery. Remind them to start with very light weight and build up slowly throughout recovery. Immediately following uni-lateral surgery, individuals may not be able to do resistance training on the side of the surgery. It is still beneficial to continue with resistance training on the healthy side.³ It is a common myth that exercise should be avoided in individuals who are at risk for or who have lymphedema. Recent studies have shown that resistance training does not exacerbate or increase one's risk for lymphedema. ⁴ Preliminary studies suggest exercise may even be beneficial in increasing lymph flow in some patients.⁵
Hormone Altering Therapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased fat mass and/or loss of lean mass (depends on specific therapy) ⁶ Altered mood and/or changes in mental health ⁷ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although a healthy routine includes both aerobic and resistance training, the balance between the two may be altered depending on the side-effects the patient is experiencing. Resistance activities should be a focus for individuals experiencing a loss in lean mass. Aerobic activity should be a focus for individuals experiencing increased fat mass. Exercise improves and stabilizes mood.⁸ Individuals on hormone treatment may have low motivation to exercise and, therefore, will require increased support and motivation when starting an activity routine.

	Side Effects	Exercise Considerations
Stem Cell Transplant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decreased physical functioning, including muscle atrophy⁹ Often patients are also on chemotherapy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise is extremely important for individuals who are trying to regain muscle strength and size. Patients should be aware of the risk for muscle atrophy and reminded to start small and build up gradually. See chemotherapy considerations

References

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