



EXERCISE AND COLORECTAL CANCER

The side effects of treatment may leave you feeling low energy, but the American Cancer Society (ACS) and the American College of Sports Medicine stress the importance of moderate activity during cancer treatment. They suggest exercising as much as you're able, as studies show that exercise leads to improved outcomes. Following diagnosis, it's recommended that you return to normal daily activity as soon as you can.

WHAT IS LIGHT, MODERATE AND VIGOROUS ACTIVITY?

Physical activity: To gain maximum benefits of physical activity (exercise), the activity should be planned and structured. Light and moderate exercises are typically types of activity that can be performed easily while talking. Vigorous activity is a type of activity that increases heart rate and typically makes you breathe more heavily.

WHY SHOULD YOU ENGAGE IN PHYSICAL ACTIVITY?

Prevention!

- Over 60 studies suggest a reduction of colon cancer risk (at least 20-25% and maybe more) for people who exercise regularly as compared with people who have low levels of physical activity.
- To protect against cancer, get 30-60 minutes per day of moderate to vigorous physical activity!

Physical Activity Can Be:

- Reduce fatigue by 40-50% (compared to those who don't exercise)
- Combat depression
- Reduce the risk of weak bones (osteoporosis)
- Reduce nausea
- Improve self-esteem

It may also help colorectal cancer patients and survivors live longer.

PATIENTS ON TREATMENT SHOULD TAKE CAUTION TO AVOID:

- Vigorous exercise if you have a low red blood cell count
- Heavy weight training while in active treatment
- Using public gym equipment if you have a low white blood cell count
- Swimming in public hot tubs, pools, lakes and rivers



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WHAT ARE SOME TIPS TO GET STARTED?

- Talk to your doctor about exercise and fitness programs available through the cancer center
- Plan your exercise routine on your personal fitness level
- Set short-term goals (this week I will ___, this month I will)
- Take breaks as needed during exercise
- Exercise with a friend
- Try a stationary bike if you have neuropathy
- Start slow and listen to your body - treatment recovery can take time
- Take the stairs or ride your bike if you feel able
- Be kind to yourself - getting back into an exercise routine can be hard

Start slow and listen to your body. Almost half of CRC patients need six months before feeling able to achieve the recommended amount of exercise for healthy adults.

WHAT IF YOU ARE NO EVIDENCE OF DISEASE (NED) OR LIVING WITH STABLE DISEASE?

Physical activity is recommended. Benefits include:

- Reduced risk of recurrence. Colon cancer survivors can reduce their risk by walking and staying active.
- Manage weight.
- Improved mental health.

WHAT'S THE RECOMMENDED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR ADULT SURVIVORS?

- Goal of two hours and 30 minutes of moderate physical activity OR one hour and 15 minutes per week of vigorous activity.
- Incorporate strength training 2x per week.

If you have an ostomy, talk to your doctor about any precautions you should take while exercising.

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