



From Treatment to Living Again: Rebuilding Your Body Safely After Cancer

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Movement is a powerful part of recovery

- Exercise is body movement
- Exercise is medicine
- Bodies are made to move
- If you don't use it, you lose it
- Movement matters at every stage



What happens to the body? After Diagnosis



Stress response

- Stress hormones increase
- Heart rate and blood pressure rise
- Muscles tighten
- Breathing becomes shallow
- Sleep is disrupted
- Appetite changes
- Fatigue increases
- Brain fog or difficulty concentrating
- Motivation to move decreases
- Less movement leads to rapid deconditioning

Exercise right after diagnosis

- Focus on consistency, not intensity
- Doing simple movements, like walking or cycling (cardio exercise), can reduce anxiety and depression
- Add resistance workouts over time
- REMEMBER “use it or lose it”.



Prehabilitation

- **Prehabilitation means preparing your body before treatment begins – like training before a marathon.**
- **Begins between diagnosis and start of treatment (surgery, chemo, radiation)**



- **Prehabilitation helps:**

- **Build physical and psychological reserve**
- Reduce anxiety and uncertainty after diagnosis
- Keep more muscle
- Reduce severe deconditioning
- Tolerate treatment
- Improve recovery speed (shorten hospital stay)

Exercise for Prehabilitation

- Consult with your doctor before you start.
- Start **ASAP after diagnosis**
- Start slow and keep it simple
- Individualize Exercise based on:
 - Cancer type
 - Planned treatment
 - Baseline fitness
- Focus: Aerobic fitness, Strength, Functional movements (Daily life activities)
- Build reserve before the storm

What happens to the body? During Cancer Treatment

Cancer treatment can affect many parts of the body

- Muscle loss & weakness
- Fatigue and reduced energy
- Balance problems and fall risk
- Bone loss
- Neuropathy and Lymphedema
- Reduced mobility and flexibility
- Fear, anxiety, and loss of confidence
- Less movement → more weakness and deconditioning



Exercise helps protect function, strength, and independence.

Exercise During Treatment



Remember:

- The purpose of the exercise is to **maintain**
- Adjust exercise to treatment cycles and symptoms
- Exercise intensity changes day by day
- Stop when you feel pain or discomfort
- Use limited energy wisely

Focus on:

- Strength exercise → maintain muscle
- Cardio exercise → support the heart and energy
- Gentle daily movement → prevent deconditioning
- **Doing a little—and doing it consistently—is a win**

What happens to the body? After Treatment

Why am I still tired?

- Heart and lung changes
- Muscle and bone loss
- Slower metabolism
- Nerve pain and joint pain
- Ongoing treatment side effects

The body is still healing; recovery takes time.



Rehabilitation / Early Recovery

The purpose of exercise now is to rebuild and restore.

- Be kind to your body
- Start where you are
- Avoid sitting too long
- Move regularly, little by little
- Listen to your body
- Don't rush back to old exercise routines
- Simple body movement is enough at first
- Housework and daily activities count as exercise
- Talk with your doctor or physical therapist when needed





Rehabilitation/Survivorship

Critical second phase of therapy, not the end

Exercise continues to:

- Improve long-term outcomes
- Support recovery and return to function
- Potentially reduce recurrence risk (emerging evidence supports this)
- Improve fitness, vitality, and quality of life

Now you are already doing prehabilitation for future obstacles.

Exercise in Cancer Care: Key Phases

Prehabilitation	Active Treatment	Rehabilitation
Before Treatment	During treatment	After Treatment
Build Reserve	Maintain Function	Rebuild & Restore
Prepare	Protect	Recover

Thank you!

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Resources

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