

Staff guide: Physical Activity Chemotherapy



Improves
cancer-related
fatigue



Helps
depression



Helps
anxiety



Improves sleep
quality



Improves
quality of life



Improves
cardiorespiratory
fitness



Improves
cognitive
function



Improves
muscle strength



Reduces
hormone/metabolic
dysfunction



Helps joint
pain



Helps body
composition



Reduces post
treatment
complications



Helps
lymphoedema



Helps
sexual function

Minimum Guidelines For Adults



5 days a week for 30 minutes which increases heart rate and breathing so you can talk but not sing



Strength activities 2-3 x a week for large muscle groups at a level where you need a short rest before repeating the activity



If over 65 years old, do activities that challenge balance 2 x a week

- 1. Choose an activity and do it several times a week**
- 2. Increase the amount of time per session**
- 3. Make it more challenging i.e. adding speed, walking up hills, adding a weight**

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Evidence for benefits during chemotherapy

Physical activity during chemotherapy can reduce side effects including cardiovascular decline, pain, fatigue, nausea & vomiting and improves strength.

Physical activity can help with chemotherapy tolerance and reduce side effects.

- **Fluid retention & swelling:** Physical activity & exercise can help to reduce & manage chemotherapy related swelling.
- **Bone health:** Weight-bearing plus impact exercises (stairs, walking, jumping) is important for bone health as chemo can cause bone loss.
- **Joint & muscle pain?** Physical activity can help. Warm up & cool down helps the body prepare & recover from activity.
- **Muscle strength:** Exercises are important as chemotherapy can cause muscle loss.
- **Fatigue:**
 - Combined aerobic & resistance exercise is the number one treatment for fatigue & improving energy levels.
 - Avoid 'boom & bust'; on good days do 80% of physical activity, and 40% on a 'not so good' day.
 - Avoid total sedentary rest.
 - Keep a diary on how fatigue responds to different activities.

Look out for:

- **Cardiotoxicity?** Consider a referral to a cancer physiotherapist for physical activity support.
- **Platelets:** Physical activity is beneficial, but avoid activities which cause external impact i.e. bruising or risk of falls.
- **Low haemoglobin:** Do multiple short spells of daily physical activity rather than longer and fewer. Aim to monitor through breathing level (talk but not sing), rather than use heart rate monitors.
- **Neutropenic:** Avoid busy or poorly ventilated gyms or pools during time of neutropenia, recommend outdoors or home exercise. Avoid high intensity exercise until counts improve.
- **PICC line:**
 - Avoid swimming with PICC line in situ.
 - For strength training refer to physiotherapist for supervised strengthening while PICC line is in situ.

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Practical advice

- **Chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy (CIPN):**
 - **Safety:**
 - A stationary bike, arm bike or seated exercises may be a safer option.
 - Nordic walking sticks can give extra confidence in walking & getting an effective workout.
 - Encourage good footwear & keep a close eye on foot health.
 - Ensure grip is sufficient when holding objects i.e. hand weights
 - Exercise that challenges balance can improve steadiness & reduce risk of falls.
 - **Comfort:**
 - If CIPN is painful, swimming or cycling may be more comfortable.
 - Walking can be a good activity during chemotherapy. If it increases CIPN pain, break it up into 5-10 minute sessions throughout the day.
 - Desensitisation exercises can help: refer to physiotherapist.
 - Exercises like going up on your toes or sit to stand can be an effective strengthening exercise for CIPN.

People who are already active

Encourage people who have been recently regularly physically active to continue with their physical activity. They may need to adapt to do a little less during 'not so good' phases of treatment.

Refer to physiotherapist for more advice.