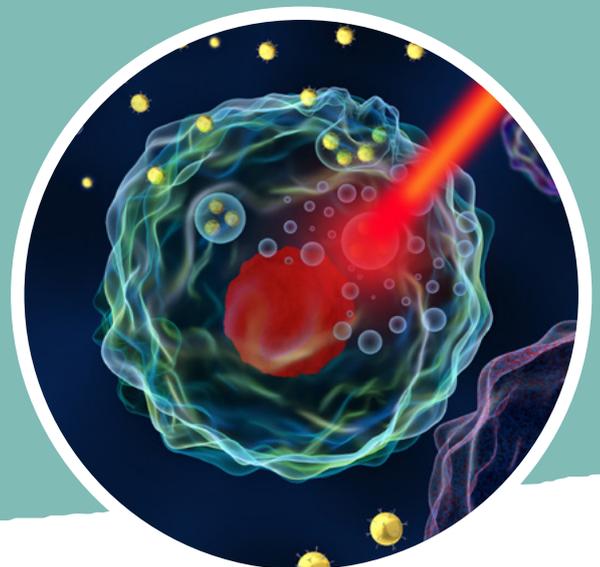


Physical Activity During Treatment for Cancer

This factsheet is for you if you have been diagnosed with, or are receiving treatment, for cancer.

Use the information in this factsheet with the booklet *Get Active Your Way*. Order your free copy on www.healthpromotion.ie



What is cancer?

Cancer is the name given to any one of a large number of diseases that develop when cells become abnormal and divide uncontrollably. These cells can destroy normal body tissue, produce harmful tumours and can spread throughout the body.

How can regular physical activity help?

If you are being treated for cancer, moderate physical activity can help to:

- increase your energy levels
- reduce anxiety
- reduce nausea
- improve your mood and self esteem
- reach and maintain a healthy weight
- improve the quality of your sleep

After your treatment, physical activity can help prevent cancer coming back and reduce the risk of developing other cancers or chronic illnesses such as heart disease and diabetes.

There is evidence that regular physical activity after diagnosis and treatment reduces the risk of breast and bowel cancer recurring.

There is also evidence that regular physical activity can help reduce the risk of developing cancer of the bowel, breast cancer in women after the menopause and endometrial cancer (cancer in the lining of the womb).

How do I get started?



Use the booklet *Get Active Your Way* to help you make a plan to become more active regularly. Make sure you balance being active with plenty of rest.

It is always advisable to check with your GP before you start becoming more active. Your GP can give you advice and support on becoming more active, while managing your condition.

Keep a record of your activities to show to your doctor or nurse. This will help them see how you are getting on and give you further advice.

To get the most health benefits from physical activity, you need to be physically active at a moderate intensity for at least 30 minutes a day on five days a week (or for 150 minutes a week).

? Should I exercise during chemotherapy or treatment for radiation?

Yes, if you can. During chemotherapy or radiation treatment you need to be as active as possible. You may need to be less active for a time and build your activity levels more slowly.

Some chemotherapy or radiation treatment and their side effects can affect the type and amount of physical activity you can do.

- **Severe anaemia (low red blood cell count)**
If you have severe anaemia, don't start exercising until your red blood cell count returns to a safe level.
- **Impaired immune system (low white blood cell count)**
If you have a low white blood cell count, do not use public gyms, swimming pools and other public places until your cell count returns to a safe level.
- **Open wounds or radiation therapy**
If you have open wounds or you are having radiation therapy, avoid swimming pools because the chlorine (a chemical used to clean the pools) may irritate your skin.

Useful contacts

www.cancer.ie

www.getirelandactive.ie