Exercise and Cancer: Creating a plan that works for you

The role of exercise has long been demonstrated to provide many positive benefits, but studies now reveal the benefits exercise provides in relation to cancer—both for prevention and to improve quality of life after diagnosis. PREVENTION

About one-third of all cancer deaths are related to diet and activity levels. The American Cancer Society® advocates that the best way to decrease the risk for cancer, other than quitting smoking, is to maintain a healthy weight, be physically active on a regular basis, and to sustain a healthy diet. No research demonstrates that exercise prevents cancer; however, maintaining a healthy body weight not only reduces the risk for cancer, but also reduces the risk for other diseases such as diabetes and heart disease. Obesity increases the risk of cancers of the breast (among post-menopausal women), esophagus, colon, and kidney as well as endometrial cancer, among others. In addition, being overweight causes the body to circulate more estrogen and insulin, which may stimulate cancer cell growth. QUALITY OF LIFE

Studies indicate exercise reduces the fatigue associated with radiation and chemotherapy treatments, and improves mood, self-esteem and well-being in cancer survivors. While exercise parameters may be adjusted during the course of treatment, studies have shown that individuals who perform even light to moderate exercise or activity experience less fatigue and return to normal function more quickly. Further, exercise may be particularly helpful for men receiving hormonal therapy for prostate cancer as it may help counteract potential muscle and bone loss. AN EFFECTIVE EXERCISE SESSION

Ideally, an exercise session incorporates four basic components: a warm up, aerobic exercise, resistance exercise and a cool down. The American Cancer Society recommends at least 30 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous activity —beyond one's normal routine—five days a week. While aerobic exercise is the most important in caloric expenditure, it should be combined with the other three components. Warm Up

5 to 10 minutes Can include: gentle stretching and walking in place, walking in water or peddling on a stationary bike without resistance Aerobic Activity

30 to 60 minutes Can include: brisk walking, biking or swimming to exercise the heart and lungs with a goal of increased endurance over time. Remember to speak to your physician and to listen to your body to determine how much physical activity is appropriate for you. Strength or Resistance Training

20 to 30 minutes Can include: lifting weights, using weight machines or utilizing resistance bands two or three times a week to maintain muscle function and improve posture Cool Down

5 to 15 minutes Stretching will allow muscles to return to their full length, and heart and respiratory rates to return to normal.

Eisenhower Medical Center has several community-based exercise programs specifically designed for cancer survivors, including the Healing Through Movement — Lebed® Method class and Strength Training for Cancer Survivors class, both of which are offered on a weekly basis. Consult the calendar on page 59 for more information.

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