

Staying active during cancer treatments



It's perfectly normal to feel more tired than usual due to your treatments. You really need to rest. And you also need to stay active. Here are a few tips to help you stay in shape, safely.

Why do I need to stay active while I'm having cancer treatments?

Getting regular exercise will help you to:

- have more energy
- reduce certain side effects (e.g. fatigue, loss of appetite, constipation)
- find it easier to manage stress related to the uncertainty of the disease
- reduce the risk of recurrence of cancer in some cases, according to studies



Also, when you keep moving, it helps you:

- see things in a more positive light
- take pride in yourself
- think more clearly
- feel better
- sleep better

What activities should I be doing?

Here are some examples:

- walking or cycling near where you live
- light housework (e.g. laundry, ironing, vacuuming)
- stretching, yoga or tai chi
- stationary bicycle or treadmill, with low resistance

How about gardening? You can certainly enjoy gardening, as long as you **wear gloves and a mask**.

Are there some activities I can't do?

Yes, there are some things you shouldn't do because of your treatments. For example, it is not advisable to use public swimming pools or spas, or to swim in a lake. Feel free to ask the members of your care team any questions you have.

Where should I start?

- > Choose activities you enjoy that are good for you.
- > Choose the time of day when you feel most energetic.
- > Rest from time to time. Do several shorter bouts of exercise rather than long periods. For example, take two 10-minute walks instead of a 20-minute walk.
- > Whatever you're doing, you should always be able to talk at the same time.
- > Eat food that's high in protein and vitamins: meat, fruit and vegetables, etc. Eating well will give you more energy for your activities.
- > Make physical activity part of your daily routine. For example, take the stairs instead of the elevator. Walk instead of taking the car.
- > Don't exercise outside in bad weather. Find a place nearby where you can walk indoors, e.g. a shopping mall or the gym at your local sports centre.
- > Ask a friend or family member to join you. It's fun, and you'll feel reassured.
- > Use walking sticks, if needed.



You'll find it easier to stay active if you know your limits. When you feel tired, rest. Take one day at a time.

What signs should I watch for?

If you feel nauseated, dizzy or unwell while you're exercising, stop immediately. Tell a member of your care team.

How should I get organized for exercise?

It may take more effort and motivation to get moving while you're being treated for cancer. Here's one way of doing that.

STEP 1: SETTING AN OBJECTIVE

Writing down your **objective** can help you get active. To start with, choose an objective that won't be too hard to reach. Don't go too fast. Your objective may change as you make progress. Be simple, realistic and as precise as possible.

E.g. Over the next month, I want to take 10-minute walks outdoors at least 3 times a week.

STEP 2: GETTING MOTIVATED

Make a list of the reasons why you want to achieve your objective. Your reasons are valuable. They will help you get through tough times.

I want to achieve my objective so I can:

- reduce side effects from my treatments
- have more energy
- see my life in a more positive light
- feel better
- get away from my problems

STEP 3: GETTING SUPPORT

Your family and friends can help you get motivated. Talk about your objective with people you trust. Ask them to support you.

The people who can help me are:

- members of my family
- my friends
- colleagues from work
- _____
- _____



STEP 4: OTHER IDEAS

Think about how you can achieve your objective.

Here’s what I’m going to do:

- find an activity I like
- keep notes on my progress
- evaluate my motivation on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = not motivated, 10 = very motivated)
- _____
- _____

STEP 5: REWARDING YOURSELF

Have you achieved your objective? On time? You deserve a reward! Think about little things you love that you could give yourself.

My reward will be:

Where should I go for help or answers to my questions?

If you have questions, feel free to contact a member of your care team.



NOTEPAD



Questions



Resource people and contacts



USEFUL RESOURCES

Canadian Cancer Society:

- > **514 255-5151**
- > **cancer.ca**

Quebec Cancer Foundation:

- > **1 800 363-0063**
- > **fqc.qc.ca**

Kino Quebec :

- > **kino-quebec.qc.ca**

Fondation Virage :

- > **514 890-8000, poste 28139**
- > **viragecancer.org**

Other health sheets published by the CHUM are available (in French only). Ask for those that might fit your situation.



You can also find them on our web site chumontreal.qc.ca/fiches-sante

The content of this document in no way replaces the recommendations and diagnoses made, or the treatment suggested by your health professional.

To find out more about the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal
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