

Physical Activity



Being active is an important part of staying healthy. Physical activity supports our bodies but also our mental, emotional and spiritual health.

There are many ways of staying active – you don't have to take up a sport or join a gym. Any activity that makes you slightly out of breath such as vacuuming, gardening, dancing or washing the car, counts as physical activity.

Any physical activity that you can build into your everyday routine will help. Remember, that the exercise you enjoy does you the most good.

“ Keeping up a level of physical activity has helped me feel less tired and lethargic during treatment. ”

Being active has many benefits. It can:

- Keep your joints healthy
- Help you stay mobile
- Build muscle strength, stamina and flexibility
- Increase heart fitness
- Improve breathing
- Encourage flow of lymph fluid
- Release endorphins
- Improve digestion
- Help with weight control
- Reduce cancer recurrence
- Improve overall survival

The lymphatic system is an important part of your immune system. It helps to clean the blood and fight infection. Unlike the circulatory system, where the heart pumps blood around your body, the lymphatic system relies on muscles squeezing the lymph fluid along the lymph vessels. Being physically active supports this.

You will probably have heard about endorphins. They help reduce pain and tension in the body and give you the 'feel good' factor. Endorphins are like chemical messengers which move through the body. Physical activity, or any activity you really enjoy, makes them more active.

Physical Activity Ideas

▶ **Walking is free and you can start from your own front door**

- Walk to the shops instead of taking the car
- Get off the bus one or two stops early and walk the rest of the way
- Walk up and down your stairs a few times
- Join The Ramblers or another walking group
- Go dog walking with a friend

▶ **Buy or borrow an exercise DVD**

▶ **Do push ups against the wall**

▶ **Put some music on and dance!**

▶ **Flex your feet, raise your legs, move your arms when watching TV**

▶ **Search your local authority website for free community exercise programmes**

▶ **Ask your GP or Cancer Nurse about Exercise on Prescription in your area**

Everyone is different. Try and listen to your body and find the right balance of rest and activity for you.

Research suggests that regular physical activity can make a difference to survival in some cancers. Thirty minutes of moderate intensity physical activity, five times a week, may increase survival rates for some cancers by 20-50%⁴.

Being active can also help with fatigue⁵. Doing some kind of exercise can seem hard when you are tired, but a short amount of movement or some simple breathing exercises can really help boost your energy levels.

Being active can also help you cope with difficult thoughts and feelings. Some people express anger and release tension by going for a brisk walk or run or punching pillows. Physical activity can be really useful in lifting your mood and is an important part of managing depression.

It is also connected with spiritual health. Activities such as yoga and walking in nature encourage relaxation and can help you feel more in balance. Remember, little and often is the best way to build physical activity into your life.

With any physical activity it's important to take care if you have a heart condition or high or low blood pressure. You should also seek advice if you are post surgery or treatment or if you have lymphodema.