

Exercise For Cancer Patients and Survivors

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Tai Chi class offered at Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center.

Physical exercise has been shown to be an important part of the recipe for preventing cancer, along with making healthy choices such as quitting smoking, maintaining a healthy body weight, decreasing stress and eating a healthy, balanced diet. But what is the ideal formula which will provide the most benefit after cancer treatment and help the transition into survivorship? The recommendations are not very different from recommendations to anyone interested in improving their health.

Maintain a Healthy Weight

Undergoing cancer treatment may cause a weight loss or gain. Speak to your physician about what a healthy weight is for you, and methods to achieve your weight goal. Control caloric intake and expenditure by choosing the right source of calories and the right amount and type of exercise.

Eat a Healthy, Balanced Diet

A well-designed, balanced diet is essential to give your body the fuel it needs. The American Cancer Society recommends eating five or more servings of fruits or vegetables daily, proteins that are low in saturated fat, and healthy carbohydrates (such as those found in fruits, vegetables and whole grains). It is essential to monitor sugar and alcohol intake, maintain good hydration, and choose healthy fats, including those with omega-3 fatty acids. A consultation with a dietitian, especially one who works often with cancer patients, may also be helpful.

Exercise

Regular exercise can play an important role in enhancing one's recovery and quality of life following cancer treatment. The benefits include reducing fatigue and depression, increasing energy, metabolism and self-esteem, increasing balance and flexibility, and increasing heart and bone health. Exercise has also been found to reduce the risk of reoccurrence in breast and colon cancer. A physical therapist can help design a proper program which incorporates the right amount and type of exercise for cancer survivors. Exercise can also be incorporated into normal daily activities or recreational activities and can be performed individually or as part of a group. Exercise regimens should be discussed with your physician.

Exercise Classes Available at Eisenhower Lucy Curci Cancer Center

In addition to a physical therapy consultation, Eisenhower Medical Center's Occupational Therapy Department offers a variety of classes for cancer survivors designed to provide exercise, stimulate free movement — thereby decreasing focus on one's pain and physical limitations — and enhance quality of life.

Movement Class for Cancer Survivors emphasizes stretching, range of motion, mind/body stress reduction and relaxation, lymphatic mobilization and yoga.

Cancer Strength Training consists of a warm-up, cardiovascular exercise, strengthening, stretching, balance training, core training, and body weight training using walking, weights, Theraband® and smart bells.

Healthy Steps Lebed Class is based on the passive and active motions of the upper and lower extremities to facilitate healing through movement and dance. Specific breathing exercises, a lymphatic system warm-up, range-of-motion exercises, cardiopulmonary exercises, Theraband-resisted exercise, and a cool-down period, are coordinated with music and relaxation.

Tai Chi features slow, synchronized postures designed to exercise the mind/body/spirit concept. The muscles of the body are worked gently while the mind focuses on concentration and memory, improving the flow of Qi (pronounced chee), a vital life energy that sustains health and clears the mind.

The Walking Class focuses on specific exercises to build strength in the legs for walking and incorporates a variety of walking activities, including balance, incline and decline surfaces, uneven surfaces, obstacle avoidance and walking endurance.

Class Sign-up Information

Classes are at no charge for cancer patients and survivors and all participants must obtain a signed physician consent form. For more information, call 760-834-3798.

Therapy services provided to cancer survivors may include lymphedema management (including manual lymphatic drainage, compression bandaging and garments, scar management and proper skin care); swallowing and speech evaluation and treatment, and exercise/therapy for pelvic health/incontinence. Therapy programs are covered by Medicare and most other insurance companies. For more information, call 760-773-1630.