

Physical activity and cancer





“ I got information and advice from Macmillan. After surgery I was back to dancing after 5 weeks. When you’re thinking about the music, the steps and the posture, there’s no room for anything else. ”

Peter, diagnosed with kidney cancer

About this booklet

This booklet is about physical activity and cancer. Physical activity is any type of exercise or movement that uses your muscles. This includes everyday activities such as walking, housework and gardening. Any activity will help maintain or improve your fitness, health and well-being.

This booklet is for anyone who has cancer or has had treatment for cancer and is thinking about becoming more physically active.

This booklet explains what physical activity is, its benefits and how to be safe when exercising. It also includes information about the types of activity you can do and how to get started. We hope it helps you deal with some of the questions or feelings you may have.

How to use this booklet

This booklet is split into sections to help you find what you need. You do not have to read it from start to finish. You can use the [contents list](#) to help you. It is fine to skip parts of the booklet. You can always come back to them when you feel ready.

Quotes

In this booklet we have included quotes from people with cancer who have tried to become more physically active. This includes Peter, who is on the cover of this booklet. The others are from people who have chosen to share their story with us. To share your experience, visit [macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/shareyourstory)

For more information

If you have more questions or would like to talk to someone, call the Macmillan Support Line free on **0808 808 00 00**, 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm, or visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

If you would prefer to speak to us in another language, interpreters are available. Please tell us, in English, the language you want to use.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call us using Relay UK on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the Relay UK app.

We have some information in different languages and formats, including audio, easy read, Braille, large print, interactive PDF and translations. To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call **0808 808 00 00**.

Services that we mention

Before starting any physical activity plan, it is important to talk to a healthcare professional first. Who you talk to will depend on who is involved in your care. There are lots of different services that maybe able to help answer your questions or refer you to the right people to help. These are the services we mention in this booklet:

- Cancer doctor or oncologist – a doctor who treats people who have cancer.
- Clinical nurse specialist (CNS) – a nurse who gives information about cancer, and support during treatment.
- GP – a local doctor who treats general medical conditions.
- Physiotherapist – someone who gives advice about exercise and mobility.

- Radiographer – someone who plans and gives radiotherapy, and supports people during radiotherapy treatment.
- Occupational therapist – someone who gives information, support and aids to help people with tasks such as washing and dressing.
- Cancer exercise specialist – a fitness instructor who is qualified to help people with cancer exercise safely.
- Clinical exercise physiologist – a healthcare professional who is an expert in assessing and advising what physical activity is best for you and your situation.
- Dietitian – someone who gives information and advice about food and food supplements.
- Palliative care team – medical professionals who help with symptom control and end-of-life care.

When we use the terms healthcare professional or healthcare team in this booklet, we mean any of the people mentioned above.

You may not have access to some of the professionals mentioned above. This will depend on where you live in the UK. Some hospitals have clinical exercise physiologists, and some do not. If you are unsure who can answer your questions, ask your cancer doctor or specialist nurse to tell you the best person to contact.



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About physical activity

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What is physical activity?

Physical activity is any movement where your body uses your muscles. It requires more energy than resting. Being physically active can mean doing daily activities such as:

- housework, for example vacuuming
- gardening
- walking to the shops
- walking up the stairs instead of taking the lift.

Or it can mean more energetic activities, such as:

- dancing
- running
- cycling
- swimming.

The type of physical activity you can do if you have cancer will depend on:

- what stage you are at with cancer treatment
- what activities you enjoy
- what motivates you
- your level of fitness or how active you were before you were diagnosed.

Why be active?

Being active before, during and after cancer treatment is safe. It can:

- reduce tiredness
- be good for your heart
- improve your mood and emotional well-being
- reduce anxiety and depression
- help you keep to a healthy weight
- strengthen your muscles
- improve bone health
- improve your flexibility and help with stiffness
- improve balance
- increase your confidence.

Research suggests that along with having a healthy diet, being physically active can help [reduce the risk of some cancer types coming back](#). It can also help reduce the risk of developing other health problems, such as heart disease, stroke and diabetes. We have more information about having healthy diet in our booklet [Healthy eating and cancer](#).



Being active with cancer

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Being active before treatment

Being active before you start cancer treatment may:

- improve your general fitness
- help you recover more quickly
- mean you have fewer side effects, or that they are less severe
- help you feel more in control and mentally prepared for treatment.

If you know you are going to have treatment, your doctor might encourage you to start some physical activity beforehand. You may hear them using the term prehabilitation, or prehab for short. Prehab means getting you as ready for treatment as you can be. To help you prepare, your team may give you advice and support about:

- physical activity or exercise
- healthy diet and weight
- stopping smoking
- reducing alcohol intake
- mental health and well-being.

It is important to get advice from your healthcare team about exercise and making changes to your diet. You may not have much time before starting treatment, but even making small changes to your physical activity, diet and lifestyle can help. Some people have to start treatment straight away, so there is no time to become more active before treatment. If this happens, you can talk to your cancer doctor or specialist nurse about plans to get active during or after treatment. They may refer you to another healthcare professional for advice.

Being active during and after treatment

Whatever cancer treatment you have, being physically active during and after treatment has benefits. This includes cancer treatment that is completed within a few weeks or months. It also includes treatments taken for several years, such as hormonal therapy for breast or prostate cancer.

Being active may help you:

- maintain your fitness, strength, and mental well-being
- manage ongoing side effects such as tiredness (fatigue)
- reduce your risk of late effects after treatment
- reduce the risk of certain cancers coming back.

Being physically active during and after treatment is generally safe. But there may be some specific activities you need to avoid or be careful with. We have information about [exercising safely](#).

If you are not sure about being active during treatment, talk to your [healthcare team](#). Some hospitals and community services have cancer exercise specialists, clinical exercise physiologists or classes that you can be referred to.

What you can manage will depend on your level of fitness and the treatment you are having. There may be some weeks when you have to do less, such as immediately after chemotherapy.

Remember to take things slowly. Try not to do too much, even on a good day. It is best to try to increase the amount of activity you do in the long term. Try not to worry about any short-term setbacks.

It is important not to suddenly start intense exercise that you are not used to. This can lead to injuries and complications. Doing too much too soon can put you off. It can also make it more difficult to fit exercise into your daily routine. Little and often helps to make activities more manageable, realistic and create consistency for better long-term success. At the end of an activity, you should feel energised – not totally exhausted.

If you already exercised before treatment, you may find you need to do it at a slower pace or lower intensity during treatment.

If you feel unfit and treatment is making you feel very tired, then you could start gently, by trying to:

- reduce the amount of time you spend sitting or lying down
- do some light housework or gardening
- go for a walk.

For some people, recovery may take some time after treatment ends. Being physically active after treatment can be a positive step in your recovery.

Physical activity and late effects

Late effects are side effects that may develop months or years after cancer treatment ends. Not everyone will get late effects. Your cancer doctor or specialist nurse can explain what effects your treatment may cause.

Being physically active may help to reduce your risk of some late effects. It can also help you manage some types of ongoing side effects.

Heart health

Some treatments may slightly increase the risk of heart problems. These include radiotherapy that is given close to the heart and certain chemotherapy, targeted therapy or immunotherapy drugs.

Aerobic activities can help protect your heart and improve your cardiovascular fitness level. We have more information in our booklet [Heart health and cancer treatment](#).

Bone health

Cancer treatments that reduce the levels of the hormones oestrogen or testosterone can cause bone thinning and loss. These include:

- hormonal treatments for breast cancer or prostate cancer
- treatments that cause an early menopause.

Activities where you are supporting your own body weight will help keep bones strong. These are sometime called weight-bearing exercises. They include:

- walking
- dancing
- resistance training, such as lunges and squats.

You could also try impact activities, such as jumping and skipping. But impact activities are not recommended if you have any bone metastases. We have more information about [bone problems](#).

If you have any bone problems, get advice on exercise from your healthcare team. We also have more information in our booklet [Bone health](#).

You can order our booklets and leaflets for free.
Visit be.macmillan.org.uk or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.



Fatigue (tiredness)

Fatigue is feeling very tired most or all of the time. It is not usually helped by rest or sleep. It is a common symptom of cancer and side effect of cancer treatment. For some people the more treatment they have the more tired they become.

Research shows that doing some physical activity during and after cancer treatment can help to reduce fatigue. This can be difficult if you feel so tired that you do not want to do any physical activity. Even going for a short walk can help with fatigue. Try to prioritise tasks. This means you can do more important tasks when you have the most energy. We have more information in our booklet [Coping with fatigue \(tiredness\)](#).

“ Extreme fatigue and concentration were an issue as well as my physical health being poor. I decided to focus on exercise, seeing it as almost another medicine. ”

Paul, diagnosed with tongue cancer

Anxiety and low mood

Many people feel overwhelmed when they are told they have cancer. During and after treatment, you may have many different emotions. These include uncertainty, anxiety and depression.

Research has shown that being physically active during and after treatment can help improve your mood and confidence. Doing something positive for yourself can help with anxiety and low mood. We have more information in our booklet [How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer](#).

Keeping to a healthy weight

Gaining weight

Some people may gain weight because of cancer and its treatment. If treatment makes you feel tired, you may be less active than usual. Hormonal therapies and steroids can also cause weight gain.

Being active and eating healthily can help you manage your weight. Keeping to a healthy weight can help reduce the risk of:

- joint problems
- back problems
- developing a new (primary) cancer – excess body fat has been linked to some cancers such as bowel, breast and womb.

We have more information in our booklet [Healthy eating and cancer](#).

Losing weight

Some people lose a lot of weight due to cancer and its treatment. The amount of muscle you have may be reduced. Physical activity can help you gain weight by building muscle. Doing exercises to help build muscle before treatment starts can mean you have some in reserve if you lose weight.

You can try to increase your food intake if you are losing weight. This will help to keep your energy levels up. This may not be easy to do as side effects like nausea may mean you have a reduced appetite. You can ask to be referred to a dietician who can help you to try and maintain a healthy weight. We have more information in our booklet [The building-up diet](#).

Other health problems

After cancer treatment, some people are more at risk of developing other health problems. Being physically active can help you manage or reduce your risk of:

- high blood pressure
- stroke
- high cholesterol
- type 2 diabetes
- kidney disease.

Reducing the risk of cancer coming back

There is some emerging evidence that being physically active at the recommended levels can reduce the risk of some cancers coming back. These include breast and bowel cancer.

Research into physical activity is ongoing. More evidence is needed before we will know how much and what specific exercise is needed to reduce the risk of cancers coming back.

“ Exercise is important to both me and my wife and, I think, to anyone with cancer. It is good for recovery and having a healthy body. ”

Jas, diagnosed with lymphoma

If you have advanced cancer

Doing physical activity is safe if you have advanced cancer. It has many of the same benefits as for people who do not have advanced cancer. It can improve bone health, mood and general fitness. It is important to remember that cancer or side effects of treatment may affect what you can do. Listen to your body and take things slowly.

If you have advanced cancer and want to be more active, the advice is the same as for people who do not have advanced cancer. You should start slowly and gradually build up the amount you do.

If you have advanced cancer, most types of light physical activity are safe, such as going for a short walk.

You can ask your cancer doctor or palliative care team to refer you to a [clinical exercise physiologist or physiotherapist](#) for advice before you start any type of exercise. You may need to avoid some types of physical activity. For example, if the [cancer is in the bones or you have bone thinning](#), you should usually avoid high-impact activities such as running, football or tennis.

To start with, try to reduce the amount of time you spend sitting or lying down during the daytime. Moving around the house and doing everyday things, such as cleaning, will help. You may be able to do short walks or gentle stretching exercises. These will help build fitness and flexibility. This can help with daily tasks such as putting on shoes, dressing or washing.

Resistance exercises can also help strengthen your muscles and bones. These help with:

- getting in and out of a chair
- getting in or out of the bath
- going up and down stairs.

Doing [resistance exercises](#) and exercises that [improve balance](#) can help reduce your risk of falls.

If you were very active before cancer or treatment, you may not be able to do the same amount as before you were diagnosed.



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What types of activity should I do?

If possible, try to do a mix of activities that improve your aerobic fitness, balance, strength and flexibility. Becoming active for the first time or returning to activity during or after cancer is not always easy. If you are going through treatment, you may find it useful to plan your activity around this. If you usually feel very tired at a certain time of day, avoid planning activity for this time.

Think about what you are most interested in doing and what you would enjoy the most. You could make a list below of the different activities you and your family and friends could try. There is not a single activity that is best for everyone. The important thing is to choose something that fits in with your life.

Exercise intensity

If you have not been active for a while, you should increase your activity slowly. Try to do a little more activity each week.

Intensity means how much energy you use. You may exercise at the following levels:

- Light intensity – this means you are breathing and talking easily. It does not feel like there is a lot of effort involved.
- Moderate intensity – this means your breathing is quicker and deeper, but you can talk. Your body warms up and your face has a healthy glow. Your heart is beating faster than normal but not racing.
- Vigorous or high intensity – this means you are breathing very hard, so you cannot carry on a conversation. Your heartbeat feels fast.

Rate of perceived exertion

RPE SCALE	Rate of perceived exertion
9 – 10	Very high or maximum intensity This means you find it hard to breathe and very difficult to speak.
7 – 8	Vigorous or high intensity This means you are breathing very hard, so you cannot carry on a conversation. Your heartbeat feels fast.
4 – 6	Moderate intensity This means your breathing is quicker and deeper, but you can talk. Your body warms up and your face has a healthy glow. Your heart is beating faster than normal but not racing.
2 – 3	Light intensity This means you are breathing and talking easily. It does not feel like there is a lot of effort involved.
1	Very light intensity This means not using much energy at all , for example standing.

When you are comfortable doing an activity for longer, you can think about increasing the intensity from light to moderate, and then to vigorous. For example, you could walk the same distance but in a shorter time and at a faster pace.

Aerobic exercise

Aerobic exercise works your heart and lungs. It uses large muscle groups, such as the ones in your legs. It makes you breathe harder and raises your heart rate, so your heart works harder to pump blood through the body. It is good for your heart and the blood vessels that carry blood around the body.

These are common aerobic exercises:

- Daily activities – taking the stairs, doing housework such as vacuuming or hanging out washing, gardening, walking the dog and playing games with children are all considered moderate intensity activities.
- Walking briskly – this is one of the simplest and most effective aerobic exercises. It is also a weight-bearing exercise, because your feet and legs support your body's weight. This means it is good for strengthening the bones such as the spine, pelvis and leg bones. Walking can be a moderate intensity activity. All you need are shoes that are comfortable for walking.
- Gardening – this is a way of enjoying some physical activity outdoors. Heavier gardening such as digging or pushing a lawn mower may be moderate activity. Spending time in the garden might also help with stress or anxiety. If you do not have access to a garden, there are schemes across the UK where you can garden, grow fruit and vegetables or take part in nature conservation. [The Conservation Volunteers – Green Gym®](#) is one of these schemes. Visit [your local authority's website](#) to find out which schemes might be available near you.

- Running and jogging – these can be considered vigorous activity. They are good for your heart and lungs and are weight-bearing exercises. These activities are high-impact and may put stress on your spine and joints. If you have bone or joint problems, you may want to choose something less weight-bearing. This could include jogging on a trampoline, cycling or swimming.
- Cycling and swimming – these can be considered moderate or vigorous activity. They are good for your heart and lungs. They strengthen your muscles but put very little strain on your joints, because they are weight-supported exercises. They can be good activities if you have bone or joint pain. Swimming is particularly beneficial if you have lymphoedema. Swimming is not recommended if you have irritated skin due to radiotherapy. It is also not recommended if you have a PICC line or central line for treatment.
- Group exercise and other sports – there are other aerobic exercise options you could do with a friend or a group. These include circuit classes, dancing, golf, tennis, badminton and bowling. Depending on the activity, they can be moderate or vigorous intensity activities.

“ Even if I was feeling fatigued my dog motivated me to get out of the house. No matter how tired I felt I always felt so much better after I’d taken him out, exercised and got some fresh air. ”

Lara, diagnosed with breast cancer

Muscular strength exercises

Muscular strength exercises involve making your muscles work harder than usual, against some form of resistance. They strengthen muscles, bones and joints. Having good muscle strength makes it easier to do everyday things for yourself. It can help you be more independent. This is a good activity if you have, or are at risk of, bone problems.

The exercises can be done with body weight, hand weights, machines or resistance bands. These may be available from a [physiotherapist](#). You can do simple exercises at home, such as lifting cans of food or bottles of water.

After 4 to 6 weeks, or when you find the exercises too easy, you can slowly increase the weight you use. Or you can change the resistance band to make the exercises harder.

There are other simple resistance exercises you can do at home, such as moving from sitting to standing using a chair, or press-ups against a wall. The [NHS website](#) shows you how to do these and other simple exercises safely at home. [We Are Undefeatable](#) also has videos on its website that you may find useful.

Some exercise classes focus specifically on strengthening exercises you do while sitting down. These are called seated exercise classes. Ask your GP or specialist nurse if there are any in your local area. Or you can call your local leisure centre to find out what is available. We have more information on [finding activities near you](#).

If you are doing a gym-based or circuit programme with resistance machines and free weights, make sure:

- you are supervised at first
- it is run by a qualified exercise specialist who has knowledge of cancer and its treatment.

Lymphoedema and strength exercises

If you have lymphoedema, you can still include strengthening exercises. You should start slowly with light weights. You should slowly build up the number and intensity of the strengthening exercises you do. Try to keep the movement flowing as much as possible. It is important to avoid any injuries or muscle strains, as these could make lymphoedema worse. If you have a compression garment, you usually need to wear it when you exercise. Talk to your lymphoedema specialist nurse if you are unsure about resistance-strengthening exercises. We have more about lymphoedema and exercise in our booklet [Understanding lymphoedema](#).

Flexibility exercises

Exercises that stretch and work your joints and muscles help you stay flexible. They can help prevent injuries and strains. Simple stretching exercises are a good way to start, especially if you have been unwell or have recently had surgery. The NHS website has some stretches you can do. Visit www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/how-to-improve-strength-flexibility It is best to do these stretches as a daily routine. They will only take you a few minutes.

Yoga, tai chi and qi gong are also good to help improve flexibility. They use breathing techniques combined with body movements. They can also help you relax and reduce stress. Relaxation breathing can also help with stress and anxiety. You can do this anywhere and in any position for example sitting, standing or lying down. Breathe in through your nose counting from 1 to 5 and then let the breath out through your mouth again counting from 1 to 5. Do this for at least 5 minutes.

“ My mother-in-law convinced me to join her weekly yoga class. The first few months on my mat were taken up by worrying about not losing my wig in downward dog, I kept going back and got hooked. ”

Dani, diagnosed with breast cancer



Balance exercises

Yoga, tai chi, pilates, body balance and qi gong help increase balance and strength. Cycling (but not on an exercise bike) and dancing are also good for your balance. If you have problems with balance, it is a good idea to speak to a healthcare professional before starting an exercise programme. They can give you advice to help make the exercise safe for you. Balance exercises can help with the risk of falling

[We Are Undefeatable](#) has a video you can do at home.

The tables on the next 2 pages list different activities and how they improve your stamina, strength, flexibility and balance.

Activity	Aerobic/ stamina	Strength	Flexibility	Balance
Aerobic classes at a gym				
Badminton				
Brisk walking/ walking uphill				
Climbing stairs				
Cycling				
Dancing				
DIY				

Activity	Aerobic/ stamina	Strength	Flexibility	Balance
Football	✓	✓		✓
Mowing the lawn	✓		✓	
Pilates/ tai chi/ qi gong	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vacuuming	✓		✓	
Washing the car	✓	✓		✓
Water aerobics	✓	✓		
Yoga		✓	✓	✓

How much activity should I do?

There are international guidelines for physical activity and cancer. They were developed by the [American College of Sports Medicine](#). The guidelines state:

- physical activity is safe during and after cancer treatment
- you should try to avoid being inactive
- you should try to get back to your normal activities as soon as possible after treatment.

For some people, this can feel overwhelming. You can start slow and try to build up to the recommended physical activity levels. Doing something is better than doing nothing. There are [organisations and healthcare professionals](#) that can help you. It is important to listen to your body and do what you feel able to do.

Recommendations for aerobic activity

Aerobic activity is physical activity that increases your breathing. It can make you sweat and your heartbeat faster. Examples of aerobic activity include brisk walking, running or cycling. UK guidelines recommend that all adults do 1 of the following every week:

- At least 2½ hours (150 minutes) of moderate intensity activity. This means activity that causes you to breathe faster, but you can still talk.
- At least 1¼ hours (75 minutes) of vigorous intensity aerobic activity. This means activity that causes you to breathe very hard, so that you cannot have a conversation.
- A combination of both moderate and vigorous aerobic activity.

To do 150 minutes of moderate activity in a week, you could do 30 minutes of activity on 5 days of the week. On the 5 days of physical activity, you could do three 10-minute sessions during the day.

Other recommendations

As well as doing a certain amount of aerobic activity, the guidelines also recommend that you try to do the following:

- Activities that improve muscle strength on at least 2 days of the week.
- If you are at risk of falling, try to do activities that improve co-ordination and balance on at least 2 days of the week. This could be a strength and balance class, tai chi or yoga.
- Do stretching exercises before and after each session.

For some people, activities that improve [muscle strength](#) and [balance](#) may be more helpful than aerobic activity. It depends on the stage of cancer or treatment. A [physiotherapist, clinical exercise physiologist or cancer exercise specialist](#) may be able to give you some advice about which activities are most suitable for you.

Example of how to reach the Department of Health guidelines for physical activity

Day	Activity
Monday	Brisk 30 minute walk.
Tuesday	10 minutes of gardening followed by a 10 minute rest – repeat this 2 more times.
Wednesday	An at-home strength workout video using body weight or free weights to build strength.
Thursday	30 minute circuit exercise class.
Friday	Brisk 30 minute walk.
Saturday	An at-home strength workout video using body weight or free weights to build strength.
Sunday	10 minutes of vacuuming followed by a 10 minute rest – repeat this 2 more times.

Being active every day

If you are doing exercise sessions run by a professional, it is still important to make physical activity part of your daily routine. You could:

- reduce the amount of time you spend sitting or lying down
- choose the stairs rather than the lift when possible, even if it is only part of the way up
- stand up and stretch your legs every 30 minutes if you work sitting down – setting reminders on your watch or phone can help with this
- walk or cycle shorter distances rather than use the car
- get off the bus a stop earlier or later and walk the extra distance.

The infographic on the opposite page shows the amount of physical activity recommended for adults. It also suggests ways of doing it.

“ I started walking to make myself feel better. It started as 100 yards, then got a bit longer. The doctor said the end of my chemo would hit me hard, and they were right. The exercise really helped how I felt. ”

Anthony, diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia

Guide to physical activity

	Be active	Build strength	Improve balance	
	Keep your heart and mind healthy	Strengthen muscles, bones and joints	Reduce your risk of falling	
How often?	150 minutes or 75 minutes of moderate activity a week of vigorous activity a week	2 days a week	2 days a week	
Activities	Walk  Garden  Swim 	Run  Sport  Stairs 	Gym  Aerobics  Carry bags 	Dance  Tai chi  Bowling 

Sit less

Break up long periods of sitting down to help keep your muscles, bones and joints strong.

TV



Sofa



Computer





Getting more active

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Choosing an activity

Which type of activity you do, and how much you do, will depend on the following:

- How fit you were before you were diagnosed. If you were active before, you may have to build back up to the same level slowly. But you may need to build to a new level that is suitable for your situation. Some people may be able to continue as they did before their diagnosis.
- The type of cancer and treatments you had or are still having. This may affect what is safe for you to do and what you can manage.
- Any symptoms or treatment side effects you have. This includes any emotional effects of cancer.
- Any long-term conditions you have, such as heart problems.
- Whether you have long term effects of the cancer or its treatment. This might include bone problems, lymphoedema, peripheral neuropathy, heart problems, bladder changes or a stoma.

During your treatment, your energy levels will change from day to day. You should try to spend less time sitting or lying down. If you can, you should try to balance small amounts of light or moderate exercise with periods of rest (see [What types of exercise should I do?](#)).

Choose activities you enjoy and set some realistic goals for yourself. If you feel very tired the day after activity, you may be trying to do too much, too soon. Over time, you will be able to increase the amount you do.

After treatment ends, increase your activity slowly. If your treatment means you will stay on medicines for some years, it is still possible for you to be physically active. Talk to your specialist nurse or GP about being referred to a [physiotherapist, clinical exercise physiologists or cancer exercise specialist](#). You can also call our Macmillan cancer information specialists for more information on **0808 808 00 00**.

“ The recovery plan kicked in. It was all about the exercises and getting myself ready to go back to work, something I was keen to do. I am still not as good as I was, but I am getting back to where I want to be. ”

Anthony, diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia

Getting started

Before starting any physical activity plan, it is important to talk to a healthcare professional first. Who you talk to will depend on who is involved in your care. You might be nervous about starting a physical activity plan, especially if you were not very active before your cancer treatment. You may worry that you are too tired or that you might injure yourself.

As you go through treatment you may have times you feel less motivated to be active. This is okay. Doing something like stretching or a short walk is better than doing nothing at all.



Simple ways to be more active

Everyone's experience of cancer is different, both during and after treatment. Listen to your body to see which activities feel right for you.

Some people find that using a step counter (pedometer) or fitness tracker helps to keep them motivated. Setting daily step goals or distances that gradually increase over the week or month can be a great way to stay motivated. Others prefer to be active and not have anything that tracks them. It is a personal choice.

There are lots of ways you can become more active, including:

- doing more around the home, such as housework or gardening – you could do 10 minutes, then rest for 10 minutes, and repeat until you have completed 30 minutes of activity
- walking or cycling to work, to the shops, to see friends, or taking children to school
- joining a group or class – you might find ideas of types of exercise you want to try in our information about [choosing an activity](#) or [finding activities near you](#).

You could also ask your GP if they can refer you to a structured exercise programme for people with cancer or long-term conditions. These are usually based at a leisure centre with a gym or dance studio.

Finding activities near you

There are lots of organisations and websites that can help you find out which activities are available near you:

- Contact your [local council](#). Check the website or call to find out which activities are provided in parks and leisure centres.
- [Parkrun](#) is a free community event where you can walk, jog or run 5 kilometres. There are also [5k Your Way](#) events for people affected by cancer. Check their websites to find out if there is an event near you.
- Some [Maggie's centres](#) also run fitness classes or may be able to tell you about classes in your area. They also have [classes on prehabilitation](#).
- Ask your GP if they can help you find a group or specialist support. There may be services in your area that you can only access if a GP refers you. This might include referral to an exercise group, a falls prevention scheme if you are worried about falling, or for physiotherapy. For example, you may be referred to a falls prevention scheme if you have had surgery and have problems with stiffness.

- If you would like to exercise with other people with cancer, search for health groups in your local area. You can also try using the [Cancer Care Map](#) webpage. This has a list of groups in your area for people affected by cancer.
- The [BBC](#) has a page for finding sports and activities in your area.
- There is a national search tool for England on the [NHS](#) website. Choose 'find other NHS services' and then 'fitness activities and classes'. Enter your town or postcode for a list of activities near you.
- [A Local Information System for Scotland \(ALISS\)](#) allows you to find groups and support in your local community and online.
- The charity [CanRehab Trust](#) provides online exercise programmes for anyone affected by cancer.

Walking groups

Walking groups are an enjoyable, social way to become active. There are free, guided health walks across the UK. These walks are for people with different abilities. Some are specifically for people with health conditions.

England – Wellbeing Walks

[The Ramblers](#) has a scheme called Wellbeing Walks. This helps more people, including those affected by cancer, discover the joys and health benefits of walking.

Scotland – Paths for All

[Paths for All](#) has established health-walk groups across Scotland. The walks are all led by a trained volunteer and are less than an hour long.

Wales – Paths to Wellbeing

The Ramblers Cymru with funding from the Welsh Government are rolling out a project called [Paths to Wellbeing](#). This will help people get outdoors and experience the health benefits of being out in nature.

Northern Ireland – Walking for Health

[Walking for Health](#) group walks are aimed at people who do little or no physical activity but who would like to become more active. These groups are led by trained volunteers and are available throughout Northern Ireland. If you are interested in finding out about walking groups in your area or would like to become a trained walk leader, contact the physical activity co-ordinator at your local health trust.

Mobility and disability exercises

There are specific organisations that can help if you have [mobility problems](#) or a [disability](#).



Next steps

Once you have started, you will probably find that being active becomes an enjoyable part of your life. You may notice the benefits quite quickly, such as feeling less tired and stressed, and having more confidence. Noticing these changes and knowing the benefits to your health can keep you motivated, even on difficult days. If you are struggling, do not feel disappointed.

Some people find that if they sign up to a challenge it keeps them motivated. For example, you could sign up to do a 5km walk or run, a distanced swim. Or you could set a challenge with friends and family to walk a certain number of steps every day, or every week.





Tips for exercise

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Exercising safely

It is usually safe to start doing some physical activity before, during or after treatment. It can be hard to think about exercise when you are dealing with the symptoms of cancer or side effects of treatment. But becoming more active may help you cope with this.

If you decide to do some physical activity, it is important to make sure you do it safely. Even if you did regular physical activity before you were diagnosed with cancer, you may need more advice and support to ensure it is beneficial.

If you are fasting for Ramadan or other religious reasons, ask your healthcare professional for advice about exercise. It may be a good idea to concentrate on low intensity exercises for example [flexibility](#).

Here are some general tips for keeping safe when doing any type of physical activity:

- Start slowly and gradually build up the activity you do.
- Do not exercise if you feel unwell or if you have any symptoms that worry you.
- If you have bone problems, you should avoid uneven surfaces and activities that increase the risk of falling. You should also avoid high-impact activities, such as running.
- Wear comfortable trainers or walking shoes.
- Drink plenty of water, so you do not get dehydrated.
- Protect yourself in the sun.
- Have a healthy snack after exercising, such as a banana.

Having some soreness or stiffness for 2 to 3 days after physical exercise and being tired during exercise is common. If you feel very sore or very tired, try to do a bit less the next time.

You should stop exercising if you get any sudden symptoms, including:

- feeling dizzy
- chest pain
- a racing heart
- breathing problems
- feeling sick
- unusual back or bone pain
- unusual muscle pain
- a headache that does not go away.

Speak to a doctor straight away if you notice any of these, or any other symptoms.

Scans

You may be advised to avoid strenuous exercise for 24 hours before a PET-CT scan. Usually for other scans gentle exercise such as walking and general housework is okay. Your healthcare team will tell you if you need to avoid exercise before a scan. If you are unsure whether you can exercise, ask your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or radiographer. We have more information about tests and scans on our website. Visit [macmillan.org.uk/tests-scans](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/tests-scans)

“ My recent scans show the bone has started to regenerate and repair. I have had some injections for bone health but I also think the strength-building exercise have really helped. The exercises have also protected and supported my spine and helped me keep mobile. ”

Grant, diagnosed with kidney cancer

Surgery

Your cancer doctor might encourage you to start some physical activity before surgery. This can help improve your general fitness level and help with your recovery. This is known as [prehabilitation](#) or prehab.

It is important to start moving around as soon as possible after surgery. This reduces the risk of complications, such as blood clots. There may be some activities you should avoid. This will depend on the surgery you have had. For example, you may be advised to avoid lifting anything heavy for a while. Your [surgeon, physiotherapist, clinical exercise physiologist or nurse will](#) tell you which activities you should avoid and for how long.

Someone in your healthcare team may show you exercises to do when you get home. For example, people who have breast surgery are usually given arm and shoulder exercises to improve their flexibility. If you had surgery to your pelvis, or near your hips, you may be shown exercises to help strengthen your stomach and pelvic floor muscles.

Try to do any exercises for as long as you were advised to. If you have pain, discomfort or swelling that stops you doing them, tell the physiotherapist, clinical exercise physiologist or specialist nurse.

A photograph of a man and a woman smiling together. The man is in the foreground, looking to the right, and the woman is slightly behind him, also smiling. They appear to be in a bright, indoor setting, possibly a home or a community center. A green banner is overlaid on the bottom half of the image, containing a quote and the name Peter.

“ We took up dancing a couple of years before treatment but we danced on the Sunday before surgery on the Tuesday. We went back on light duties – jive was a complete no go – 4 weeks after. ”

Peter

Radiotherapy

If you have a skin reaction due to radiotherapy, wear loose fitting clothing when exercising. This is to prevent rubbing against any areas of sensitive skin.

You should avoid swimming, as the chemicals in the water can irritate your skin. After treatment ends and any skin reactions have gone, it is fine to swim again. Ask your radiotherapy team for advice about swimming during and after treatment.

Other cancer treatments

Other cancer treatments such as chemotherapy, targeted therapy and immunotherapy can lower the number of blood cells made in the bone marrow. We need different types of blood cells to do different jobs. When the number of blood cells is reduced, you may be at an increased risk of some problems.

Risk of infection

White blood cells help you fight infection. If your number of white blood cells is low, you are at an increased risk of getting an infection. While your number of white blood cells is reduced, your cancer doctor might advise you to avoid busy public places. This is because you are more likely to get an infection when around lots of people. These places might include swimming pools or gyms. You could try to do some online classes. [We Are Undefeatable](#) has some videos on its website.

We have more information about avoiding infection when you have reduced immunity. This includes a video about neutropenic sepsis on our website. Visit macmillan.org.uk/neutropenic-sepsis-bsl

Bleeding and bruising

Platelets are cells that help the blood to clot. If your number of platelets is low, you are more at risk of bruising or bleeding. Your doctor may advise you to exercise gently and avoid high-impact activities. This is usually until the number of platelets is back to a safe level.

Anaemia

If your number of red blood cells is very low, you will feel very tired and sometimes breathless. This is called anaemia. If this happens, you may not feel like exercising or only be able to manage everyday activities. It is important to listen to your body and rest when you need to until the anaemia has improved.

Central and PICC lines

If you have a central line or PICC line, you should avoid swimming. This is because of the risk of infection. You should avoid vigorous upper body exercises, which could displace your line.

Side effects and other medical conditions

Some treatment side effects or other medical conditions can affect which physical activities are right for you.

Bone problems

If you have bone thinning or cancer in the bones, you should speak to your healthcare team before doing or starting any exercise. It is usually best to avoid high-impact activities. This is because there is more risk of you breaking (fracturing) a bone with these types of activity.

High-impact activities are things that involve pounding or repetitive actions. This might include jumping up and down on a hard surface or hitting a ball with a racket. Examples of high-impact activities include:

- running
- football
- tennis
- squash
- hockey
- contact sports such as judo and karate.

It may be safe for some people to do some of these activities. This will depend on your personal risk of fracture and whether you have symptoms, such as bone pain.

Some people with bone problems may also be advised to avoid exercises where you repetitively bend forward at the waist. This includes toe-touching and sit-ups. This is because of the risk to the spine and back. Many types of activity recommend bending and toe-touching as a warm-up. If you have secondary bone cancer in the spine or hip, check with your healthcare team whether this is safe for you to do.

Some low-impact, weight-bearing activities that are usually safe for anyone with bone problems include:

- walking
- dancing
- climbing stairs
- swimming
- cycling
- light-resistance exercises.

It is also a good idea to do some exercises that improve your co-ordination and balance. This is to reduce your risk of falling. These exercises include low-impact dancing and tai chi.

Nerve damage (peripheral neuropathy)

Some cancer treatments can damage the nerves. This causes:

- numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- muscle weakness
- difficulty with balance and co-ordination.

If you are unsteady and at risk of falling, get advice about this from your healthcare team. You may need help from a physiotherapist.

If your feet or balance are affected, then some activities may not be recommended. These include:

- running or brisk walking, especially on uneven surfaces
- walking up and down steps.

Using an exercise bike or swimming may be more suitable. Remember to check your feet regularly for cuts or blisters.

If you have numbness and tingling in the hands, it may be difficult to use free weights or resistance bands. There are gloves you can buy that are used for weightlifting. These may help you grip the weight. They can also help if the weight is very cold or has a texture that your hands are sensitive to.

Lymphoedema

Physical activity can help you reduce the risk of developing lymphoedema. Or if you have lymphoedema, physical activity can help you manage it.

- If you have lymphoedema, it is helpful to do the following:
- If you have a compression garment, you usually need to wear it when you exercise. Speak to your lymphoedema specialist if you find this uncomfortable. Avoid exercises where you use your muscles without moving your body. These are called static contractions. For example, avoid the plank position. This is when you hold your body in a press-up position without moving up and down.
- Swimming can be helpful if you have lymphoedema, as it gently massages the lymphatic vessels.
- Build up the physical activity involving the affected arm or leg slowly.

Ask your lymphoedema specialist for advice. We have more information in our booklet [Understanding lymphoedema](#).

Heart or lung problems

Most people with heart or lung problems can benefit from regular physical activity. It is important to check with your doctor or specialist nurse before you start any exercise programme. This ensures there are no unstable heart or respiratory issues.

Medicines to thin the blood

If you are taking medicine to thin the blood, you will bruise more easily. Avoid high-impact activities or contact sports, as you could get knocked or fall over. This may lead to additional complications. Take extra care during all activities to avoid damaging your skin.

Stoma

If you have had surgery to the bowel or bladder, you may have a stoma. You may need time to adjust to the changes in your body. This may affect what physical activity you choose to do.

When any other wounds have properly healed, your specialist nurse (sometimes called a stoma care nurse) can help you think about how to do some physical activity with the stoma. They can also advise you on any activities you may need to avoid. They can also refer you to a [physiotherapist or clinical exercise physiologist](#).

We have more information about stomas on our website.

Visit [macmillan.org.uk/what-is-a-stoma](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/what-is-a-stoma)





Who can help?

Healthcare professionals who can help

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Healthcare professionals who can help

If you feel worried about starting physical activity, it can help to get advice. This might be if you have not been very active before or for a long time. The following professionals can help you.

Your doctor or nurse

It is best to talk to your cancer doctor, specialist nurse or GP if you are new to exercising or if you have any concerns before you start exercising. They can give you advice on whether it is safe for you to exercise. They can also give you information about any precautions you need to take.

Some GPs, cancer treatment centres and support groups have exercise referral schemes. These can refer you to a cancer exercise specialist or a clinical exercise physiologist. This will depend on where you live in the UK. There may also be an exercise programme that is part of some research at your cancer treatment centre. Ask your cancer doctor or specialist nurse for more information.

A physiotherapist, cancer exercise specialist or clinical exercise physiologist

Your GP, cancer doctor or specialist nurse can refer you to a physiotherapist. Some areas may have qualified cancer exercise specialists or clinical exercise physiologists who you can be referred to. You may also be able to refer yourself to a physiotherapist.

A physiotherapist is someone who gives advice about exercise and mobility. They can give you exercises to try at home and may be able to give you information about classes in your area.

A cancer exercise specialist is a fitness instructor who is qualified to help people with cancer to exercise safely. They might work in a gym or local leisure centre. They might offer personal training. This can help you come up with a program of exercise to suit your basic needs and likes. Some cancer exercise specialists may offer classes in cancer information centres.

A clinical exercise physiologist is a healthcare professional who is an expert in screening, assessing and advising what physical activity is best for you and your situation.

A cancer exercise specialist, physiotherapist or clinical exercise physiologist can help you:

- decide on an exercise programme that is safe and effective for you
- assess and treat any specific issues you have – for example limited movement due to surgery
- be able to exercise on your own
- increase your aerobic fitness level
- improve your energy, strength, flexibility, co-ordination and balance
- manage the side effects or late effects of treatment
- enjoy and increase your physical activity
- avoid injuries
- improve your confidence and make you feel more in control.

You can ask them questions such as:

- 'I have never exercised before – how should I start?'
- 'How can I improve my shortness of breath and feel less tired?'
- 'How can I improve my balance?'
- 'Can I improve the strength of my arms or legs?'
- 'Which exercises can help me get up the stairs?'
- 'How hard should I exercise?'

You can also visit the Ask an expert section on Macmillan's Online Community to ask questions about getting active before, during or after your cancer treatment. Visit community.macmillan.org.uk

An occupational therapist

Your GP or cancer doctor may refer you to an occupational therapist. They can advise you on how to pace yourself and manage tiredness. They may be able to teach you strategies to help you conserve your energy and manage symptoms such as breathlessness.

They can also suggest changes to your home or how you complete daily tasks. These can make tasks safer for you, and help you be more independent. Doing simple things for yourself in the home is a way of increasing your physical activity. If things are easier at home, you will also have more time and energy to do activities you like, such as walking or gardening.



Further information

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About our information

We provide expert, up-to-date information about cancer. And all our information is free for everyone.

Order what you need

You may want to order more booklets or leaflets like this one.

Visit be.macmillan.org.uk or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

We have booklets about different cancer types, treatments and side effects. We also have information about work, financial issues, diet, life after cancer treatment and information for carers, family and friends.

Online information

All our information is also available online at macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support You can also find videos featuring stories from people affected by cancer, and information from health and social care professionals.

Other formats

We also provide information in different languages and formats, including:

- audiobooks
- Braille
- British Sign Language
- easy read booklets
- interactive PDFs
- large print
- translations.

Find out more at macmillan.org.uk/otherformats

If you would like us to produce information in a different format for you, email us at informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

The language we use

We want everyone affected by cancer to feel our information is written for them.

We want our information to be as clear as possible. To do this, we try to:

- use plain English
- explain medical words
- use short sentences
- use illustrations to explain text
- structure the information clearly
- make sure important points are clear.

We use gender-inclusive language and talk to our readers as 'you' so that everyone feels included. Where clinically necessary we use the terms 'men' and 'women' or 'male' and 'female'. For example, we do so when talking about parts of the body or mentioning statistics or research about who is affected.

To find out more about how we produce our information, visit [macmillan.org.uk/ourinfo](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/ourinfo)



Other ways we can help you

At Macmillan, we know how a cancer diagnosis can affect everything, and we are here to support you.

Talk to us

If you or someone you know is affected by cancer, talking about how you feel and sharing your concerns can really help.

Macmillan Support Line

Our free, confidential phone line is open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm. We can:

- help with any medical questions you have about cancer or your treatment
- help you access benefits and give you financial guidance
- be there to listen if you need someone to talk to
- tell you about services that can help you in your area.

Our trained cancer information advisers can listen and signpost you to further support. Call us on **0808 808 00 00**. We are open 7 days a week, 8am to 8pm.

You can also email us, or use the Macmillan Chat Service via our website. You can use the chat service to ask our advisers about anything that is worrying you. Tell them what you would like to talk about so they can direct your chat to the right person. Click on the 'Chat to us' button, which appears on pages across the website. Or go to

[macmillan.org.uk/talktous](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/talktous)

If you would like to talk to someone in a language other than English, we also offer an interpreter service for our Macmillan Support Line. Call **0808 808 00 00** and say, in English, the language you want to use. Or send us a web chat message saying you would like an interpreter. Let us know the language you need and we'll arrange for an interpreter to contact you.

Macmillan Information and Support Centres

Our Information and Support Centres are based in hospitals, libraries and mobile centres. Visit one to get the information you need and speak with someone face to face. If you would like a private chat, most centres have a room where you can speak with someone confidentially.

Find your nearest centre at macmillan.org.uk/informationcentres or call us on **0808 808 00 00**.

Help with money worries

Having cancer can bring extra costs such as hospital parking, travel fares and higher heating bills. If you have been affected in this way, we can help. Please note the opening times may vary by service.

Financial guidance

Our financial team can give you guidance on mortgages, pensions, insurance, borrowing and savings.

Help accessing benefits

Our welfare rights advisers can help you find out what benefits you might be entitled to, and help you complete forms and apply for benefits. They can also tell you more about other financial help that may be available to you. We can also tell you about benefits advisers in your area. Visit macmillan.org.uk/financialsupport to find out more about how we can help you with your finances.

Help with energy costs

Our energy advisers can help if you have difficulty paying your energy bills (gas, electricity and water). They can help you get access to schemes and charity grants to help with bills, advise you on boiler schemes and help you deal with water companies.

Macmillan Grants

Macmillan offers one-off payments to people with cancer. A grant can be for anything from heating bills or extra clothing, to changes needed to your home.

Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to find out more about Macmillan Grants.

Help with work and cancer

Whether you are an employee, a carer, an employer or are self-employed, we can provide support and information to help you manage cancer at work. Visit macmillan.org.uk/work

Work support

Our dedicated team of work support advisers can help you understand your rights at work. Call us on **0808 808 00 00** to speak to a work support adviser.

Talk to others

No one knows more about the impact cancer can have on your life than those who have been through it themselves. That is why we help bring people together in their communities and online.

Support groups

Whether you are someone living with cancer or a carer, family member or friend, we can help you find support in your local area, so you can speak face to face with people who understand. Find out about support groups in your area by calling us or by visiting macmillan.org.uk/selfhelpandsupport

Online Community

Thousands of people use our Online Community to make friends, blog about their experiences and join groups to meet other people going through the same things. You can access it any time of day or night. Share your experiences, ask questions, or just read through people's posts at macmillan.org.uk/community

You can also use our Ask an Expert service on the Online Community. You can ask a financial guide, cancer information nurse, work support adviser or an information and support adviser any questions you have.

Macmillan healthcare professionals

Our nurses, doctors and other health and social care professionals give expert care and support to individuals and their families. Call us or ask your GP, consultant, district nurse or hospital ward sister if there are any Macmillan professionals near you.

Other useful organisations

There are lots of other organisations that can give you information or support. Details correct at time of printing.

Organisations that can help with physical activity

5k Your Way – Move Against Cancer

www.5kyourway.org

Aims to encourage those living with and beyond cancer, and others, to walk, jog, run or volunteer at a local parkrun event. Check their website to see if there is a 5k Your Way near you.

American College of Sports Medicine

www.acsm.org

Supports research and education into sports medicine and exercise science. Has information about health and fitness.

A Local Information Service for Scotland (ALISS)

www.aliss.org

ALISS is a national digital programme enabling people and professionals to find and share information on resources, services, groups, and support in their local communities and online.

BBC Sport

www.bbc.co.uk/sport/get-inspired/45353880

Has a list of sports and activities to get involved in.

Cancer Care Map

www.cancercaremap.org

Cancer Care Map is a simple, online resource that aims to help you find cancer support services in your local area wherever you are in the UK.

CanRehab Trust

www.canrehab.co.uk

Runs training workshops for health and fitness professionals on developing and providing safe and effective exercise-based cancer rehabilitation programmes.

The Conservation Volunteers – Green Gym®

Tel **0130 238 8883**

www.tcv.org.uk

Creates, improves and cares for green spaces from local parks, community gardens, sites of special scientific interest and public grounds, to waterways, wetlands and woodlands. Aims to connect people to green spaces.

International Breast Cancer Paddlers' Commission (IBCPC)

www.ibcpc.com

Is part of an international movement encouraging people with breast cancer to improve their physical health and well-being through dragon boating. Can give details of UK dragon-boating groups.

Move Against Cancer

movecharity.org

Has useful resources to get started with exercise. Also runs a programme for 13 to 30 year olds.

Parkrun

www.parkrun.org.uk

Parkrun is a free, community event where you can walk, jog, run, volunteer or spectate. Parkrun is 5 kilometres and takes place every Saturday morning. Check the website to find a parkrun near you.

Paths for All – Scotland

www.pathsforall.org.uk

Runs a series of low level accessible short group walks, called Health Walks. Walks are free to attend and led by a leader along a risk-assessed route'.

Paths to Wellbeing – Wales

www.pathstowellbeing.ramblers.org.uk

Ramblers Cymru has funding from the Welsh Government to start a project called Paths to Wellbeing. Aims to help people get outdoors and experience the health benefits of being out in nature.

Prehab 4 Cancer

www.prehab4cancer.co.uk

Prehab4Cancer is a free exercise, nutrition and well-being scheme. Designed by a team of NHS professionals and exercise experts, and based on research. It is based in Manchester but has exercise videos online for anyone.

The Ramblers – England

www.ramblers.org.uk

Organises Wellbeing Walks to make it easier to start walking and stay active. Check the website to find a group near you.

Stronger My Way – Chartered Society of Physiotherapy

www.csp.org.uk/campaigns-influencing/campaigns/stronger-my-way

Has videos explaining how to do exercises to make you feel stronger.

Trekstock

www.trekstock.com

Tel **0204 541 7601**

Aims to help anyone diagnosed with cancer in their 20s or 30s.

Walking for Health Groups – Health and Social Care Trusts (Northern Ireland)

www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/walking-health-groups-health-and-social-care-trusts

Aimed at people in Northern Ireland who do little or no physical activity but who would like to become more active. Groups are led by trained volunteers. To find out more, contact the physical activity co-ordinator at your local health trust.

We Are Undefeatable

www.weareundefeatable.co.uk

A movement that supports people with long-term health conditions. UK charities have come together to encourage people to be active. Has exercise videos on its website.

Financial support or legal advice and information

Local councils (England, Scotland and Wales)

Your local council may have a welfare rights unit that can help you with benefits. You can also contact your local council to claim Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction, education benefits, and for help from social services (the Social Work department in Scotland).

You should be able to find your local council's contact details online by visiting:

England

www.gov.uk/find-local-council

Scotland

www.cosla.gov.uk/councils

Wales

gov.wales/find-your-local-authority

Mobility and disability organisations

Activity Alliance

Tel **0150 922 7750**

www.activityalliance.org.uk

Activity Alliance supports Disabled people in sport and activity. Established in 1998 as a national charity, it was previously known as the English Federation of Disability Sport.

Disability Sport Northern Ireland

Tel **0289 046 9925**

Textphone **0289 046 3494**

www.dsni.co.uk

Disability Sport NI is Northern Ireland's main disability sports charity working to improve the health and well-being of disabled people through sport and active recreation.

Disability Sport Wales

Tel **0300 300 3115**

www.disabilitysportwales.com

Disability Sport Wales is a pan-disability national sport agency which provides and promotes inclusive physical activity (including sport) for disabled people in Wales.

Scottish Disability Sport (SDS)

Tel **0131 317 1130**

www.scottishdisabilitysport.com

SDS is the Scottish governing and co-coordinating body of all sports for people of all ages and abilities with a physical, sensory or learning disability.

WheelPower

Tel **0129 639 5995**

www.wheelpower.org.uk

Empowers disabled people to enjoy an active lifestyle through accessible sports.

General cancer support organisations

Black Women Rising

www.blackwomenrisinguk.org

Aims to educate, inspire and bring opportunities for women from the BAME community. Shares stories and supports Black cancer patients and survivors through treatment and remission.

Cancer Black Care

Tel **0208 961 4151**

www.cancerblackcare.org.uk

Offers UK-wide information and support for people from Black and minority ethnic communities who have cancer. Also supports their friends, carers and families.

Cancer Focus Northern Ireland

Helpline **0800 783 3339**

www.cancerfocusni.org

Offers a variety of services to people affected by cancer in Northern Ireland.

Cancer Research UK

Helpline **0808 800 4040**

www.cancerresearchuk.org

A UK-wide organisation that has patient information on all types of cancer. Also has a clinical trials database.

Cancer Support Scotland

Tel **0800 652 4531**

www.cancersupportscotland.org

Runs cancer support groups throughout Scotland. Also offers free complementary therapies and counselling to anyone affected by cancer.

Macmillan Cancer Voices

www.macmillan.org.uk/cancervoices

A UK-wide network that enables people who have or have had cancer, and those close to them such as family and carers, to speak out about their experience of cancer.

Maggie's

Tel **0300 123 1801**

www.maggies.org

Has a network of centres in many locations throughout the UK. Provides free information about cancer and financial benefits. Also offers emotional and social support to people with cancer, their family, and friends.

Penny Brohn UK

Helpline **0303 3000 118**

www.pennybrohn.org.uk

Offers physical, emotional and spiritual support across the UK, using complementary therapies and self-help techniques.

Riprap

www.riprap.org.uk

Developed especially for teenagers in the UK who have a parent with cancer. Has an online forum where teenagers going through similar experiences can talk to each other for support.

Tenovus

Helpline **0808 808 1010**

www.tenovuscancercare.org.uk

Aims to help everyone in the UK get equal access to cancer treatment and support. Funds research and provides support such as mobile cancer support units, a free helpline, benefits advice and an online 'Ask the nurse' service.

General health information

British Heart Foundation

www.bhf.org.uk

Provides information about heart and circulatory diseases. Also has healthy lifestyle tips and advice.

Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland

www.northerntrust.hscni.net

Provides information about health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

NHS.UK

www.nhs.uk

The UK's biggest health information website. Has service information for England.

NHS 111 Wales

111.wales.nhs.uk

NHS health information site for Wales.

NHS Inform

Helpline **0800 22 44 88**

www.nhsinform.scot

NHS health information site for Scotland.

Patient UK

www.patient.info

Provides people in the UK with information about health and disease. Includes evidence-based information leaflets on a wide variety of medical and health topics. Also reviews and links to many health- and illness-related websites.

Emotional and mental health support

Mind

Helpline **0300 123 3393**

www.mind.org.uk

Provides information, advice and support to anyone with a mental health problem through its helpline and website.

Samaritans

Helpline **116 123**

Email jo@samaritans.org

www.samaritans.org

Provides confidential and non-judgemental emotional support, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair.

LGBT-specific support

LGBT Foundation

Tel **0345 330 3030**

www.lgbt.foundation

Provides a range of services to the LGBT community, including a helpline, email advice and counselling. The website has information on various topics including sexual health, relationships, mental health, community groups and events

OUTpatients

www.outpatients.co.uk

Supports and advocates for LGBTIQ+ cancer patients in the UK, inclusive of all genders or types of cancer. Also produces information, and runs a peer support group with Maggie's Barts.

Disclaimer

We make every effort to ensure that the information we provide is accurate and up to date but it should not be relied upon as a substitute for specialist professional advice tailored to your situation. So far as is permitted by law, Macmillan does not accept liability in relation to the use of any information contained in this publication, or third-party information or websites included or referred to in it. Some photos are of models.

Thanks

This booklet has been written, revised and edited by Macmillan Cancer Support's Cancer Information Development team. It has been approved by Professor Anna Campbell, Professor in Clinical Exercise Science at Edinburgh Napier University.

With thanks to: Naman Julka-Anderson, Radiographer; Katie Booth, Physiotherapist; Dr Fabio Gomes, Consultant Medical Oncologist; Emily Stephenson, Physiotherapist; and Dr Clare Stevinson, academic researcher and lecturer, Loughborough University.

Thanks also to the people affected by cancer who reviewed this edition, and those who shared their stories.

We welcome feedback on our information. If you have any, please contact **informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk**

Sources

Below is a sample of the sources used in our physical activity information. If you would like more information about the sources we use, please contact us at **informationproductionteam@macmillan.org.uk**

Campbell K, Winters-Stone K, Wiskemann J, et al. Exercise guidelines for cancer survivors: consensus statement from international multidisciplinary roundtable. *Med Sci Sports Exerc.* 2019 November; 51(11): 2375–2390 [accessed February 2023].

www.gov.uk Physical activity for adults and older adults: 19 and over [accessed February 2023].

Can you do something to help?

We hope this booklet has been useful to you. It is just one of our many publications that are available free to anyone affected by cancer.

They are produced by our cancer information specialists who, along with our nurses, benefits advisers, campaigners and volunteers, are part of the Macmillan team. When people are facing the toughest fight of their lives, we are here to support them every step of the way.

We want to make sure no one has to go through cancer alone, so we need more people to help us. When the time is right for you, here are some ways in which you can become a part of our team.

5 ways you can help someone with cancer

1. **Share your cancer experience**

Support people living with cancer by telling your story, online, in the media or face to face.

2. **Campaign for change**

We need your help to make sure everyone gets the right support. Take an action, big or small, for better cancer care.

3. **Help someone in your community**

A lift to an appointment. Help with the shopping. Or just a cup of tea and a chat. Could you lend a hand?

4. **Raise money**

Whatever you like doing you can raise money to help. Take part in one of our events or create your own.

5. **Give money**

Big or small, every penny helps. To make a one-off donation see over.

Please fill in your personal details

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other

Name

Surname

Address

Postcode

Phone

Email

Please accept my gift of £
(Please delete as appropriate)

I enclose a cheque / postal order /
Charity Voucher made payable to
Macmillan Cancer Support

OR debit my:

Visa / MasterCard / CAF Charity
Card / Switch / Maestro

Card number

Valid from

Expiry date

Issue no

Security number

Signature

Date / /

Do not let the taxman keep your money

Do you pay tax? If so, your gift will be worth 25% more to us – at no extra cost to you. All you have to do is tick the box below, and the tax office will give 25p for every pound you give.

I am a UK tax payer and I would like Macmillan Cancer Support to treat all donations I make or have made to Macmillan Cancer Support in the last 4 years as Gift Aid donations, until I notify you otherwise.

I understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand Macmillan Cancer Support will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give.

Macmillan Cancer Support and our trading companies would like to hold your details in order to contact you about our fundraising, campaigning and services for people affected by cancer. If you would prefer us not to use your details in this way please tick this box.

In order to carry out our work we may need to pass your details to agents or partners who act on our behalf.

If you would rather donate online go to macmillan.org.uk/donate



Please cut out this form and return it in an envelope (no stamp required) to: Supporter Donations, Freepost RUCY-XGCA-XTHU, Macmillan Cancer Support, PO Box 791, York House, York YO1 0NJ

This booklet is about physical activity and cancer. Physical activity is any type of exercise or movement that uses your muscles. This includes everyday activities such as walking, housework and gardening.

This booklet is for anyone who has cancer or has had treatment for cancer and is thinking about becoming more physically active.

At Macmillan, we give people with cancer everything we've got. If you are diagnosed, your worries are our worries. We will help you live life as fully as you can.

For information, support or just someone to talk to, call **0808 808 00 00** or visit [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)

Would you prefer to speak to us in another language? Interpreters are available. Please tell us in English the language you would like to use. Are you deaf or hard of hearing? Call us using Relay UK on **18001 0808 808 00 00**, or use the Relay UK app.

Need information in different languages or formats? We produce information in audio, interactive PDFs, easy read, Braille, large print and translations.

To order these, visit [macmillan.org.uk/otherformats](https://www.macmillan.org.uk/otherformats) or call our support line.



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