



Physical activity after bowel cancer

People living with and beyond cancer are now encouraged to remain active and resume daily activities as soon as possible during and after their treatment. Evidence is also growing to prove that physical activity during and after cancer treatment can help to improve the results of treatment.

Returning to physical activity following any kind of operation can be challenging. The most important thing to remember is not to be too hard on yourself. It can be frustrating being unable to complete everyday tasks or being unable to walk very far, but it will take time. Try to think of something fun that you do, and then slowly build up so that you will be able to do more as your energy, stamina and strength return.

There are benefits to returning to physical activity. It can help manage the side effects of treatment, including reducing cancer-related fatigue. It can improve your mood if you are feeling low or frustrated, and it can reduce stress and anxiety as well as being an excellent way to help maintain a healthy heart and circulation and a healthy weight.

Physical activity

It is normal to feel a little nervous about getting started with any new exercise plan so it is a good idea to keep a diary of your daily activities. That way you can record progress and monitor how you feel during and after exercise in terms of mood and energy levels. Soon, it will give you a great source of achievement too, when you see how much you have been able to achieve.

After your operation, when you are up and able to perform everyday tasks, it is good to start incorporating other forms of exercise. Walking is a good place to start as soon as possible following surgery. Celebrate the small improvements in activity. Even walking to the end of the hall or around the house is enough in the beginning.

tips

- 1 Gradually build up physical activity levels until you are doing 30 minutes of moderate intensity activity
- 2 Start by going out for a walk for 10 minutes, 2-3 times per day if you can
- 3 Include stretching in your daily routine to keep your muscles flexible
- 4 Little and often is of more benefit than longer, less often activities

For more tips on getting active visit

www.macmillan.org.uk/Cancerinformation/livingwithandaftercancer

Rebuilding strength and confidence

Following any surgery on your abdomen, your muscles are not as strong as they were before, especially around your surgical scars.

Talk to a physiotherapist about how to avoid a hernia, which can be a side-effect of 'doing too much too soon'.

- » **Don't lift or push very heavy objects**
- » **Breathe out when lifting anything, this supports your abdomen and back**

Recommended exercise for improving core (abdominal) strength are:

- » **Pilates**
- » **Yoga**
- » **Tai chi**



Health and fitness professionals who work with people living with and beyond cancer have specialist knowledge and skills to help them understand your specific needs. For more information about fitness professionals working in your area, contact info@canrehab.co.uk.

All professionals with these advanced level qualifications are registered and their details can be also obtained from the Register of Exercise Professionals.

case study

Stoma patient **Satori Hama**

“ My first operation was an open laparotomy after which I had been told it would take an average of six weeks to regain mobility. Before my operation, I was advised that I would be encouraged to start to be mobile as soon as possible. The physiotherapist gave me a routine to follow, starting with some simple bed exercises. These consisted of deep breathing and coughing exercises to make sure I was maintaining my lung capacity until I was up and moving again. I also had ankle, knee, and leg exercises to do, all while lying down or sitting up in bed. The physio also showed me how to do pelvic floor lifts (in bed) so that I could start them as soon as possible. This helped me to first strengthen the big, core muscles in my pelvis (called the pelvic floor) and then to start building up the muscles supporting my back and my stomach. Doing these exercises regularly also helped me with the discomfort I had with the surgical scar, and was really useful for regaining good control after the surgery. ”



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