



How does exercise help with cancer care?

EXERCISE AND ONCOLOGY

It may have slipped your notice, but Australia has just become the first country to put forward a position statement that is aimed at prescribing exercise to all cancer patients as part of their treatment. This position statement was prepared by The Clinical Oncology Society of Australia (COSA) which has been endorsed many health organisations around Australia. It states that “Exercise is to be embedded as part of standard practice in cancer care and to be viewed as an adjunct therapy that helps counteract the adverse effects of cancer and its treatment.” Furthermore, best practice cancer care can be via a referral to an Exercise Physiologist or a Physiotherapist with experience in cancer care (1). So how does exercise help with cancer care?

Research demonstrates that exercise that is performed before, during and following cancer treatment can help reduce the severity of side effects while also reducing the risk in developing new cancers. It also reduces the risk in developing conditions such as cardiovascular disease, osteoporosis and diabetes (1). If this wasn't motivating enough, the strongest evidence supporting exercise and oncology comes in its benefits in improving physical function, reducing cancer related fatigue and improving quality of life across multiple health domains.

So what is the recommended exercise dosages for those people with cancer? Per COSA, all people with cancer should be aiming to build towards and once achieved, maintain: “at least 150 mins of moderate intensity or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity aerobic exercise each week; and two to three resistance sessions each week at a moderate to vigorous intensity targeting all major muscle groups.” While that seems like an awful lot, when you break it down it comes to 30 mins a day over 5 days in your week with resistance sessions complementing those. The key is that this is the goal to build towards, by working together with your Exercise Physiologist they can help you safely and progressively meet those goals. To find out more, get in touch with your local Exercise Physiologist.

1. COSA Position Statement on Exercise in Cancer Care (May 2018)

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