

Exercise for Cancer Patients

Dear Friends:

Listen up!
It's time to take our lifestyle repercussions seriously!!

Data obtained from the Terry Fox Foundation noted the following Canadian Statistics regarding general Cancer diagnosis:

On average, 2,798 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer every week.

On average, 1,313 Canadians will die of cancer every week.

These general statistics are staggering and the numbers are certainly something to sit up and take notice to. Cancer is the number two cause of death (after heart disease) in North America since 2005.

There are several research documents that have shown that the physical deterioration and lack of function associated with aging is correlated to a sedentary lifestyle. In other words, if you don't use it, you lose it. It seems more and more we hear that many Canadians as well as our American counterparts are in the "losing it" category. Canadians are losing physical function from inactivity and as a result are gaining weight. The cascade then begins with increased incidence of degenerative diseases, many types of cancer, heart disease, hypertension, stroke, diabetes, obesity and arthritis. Now that the scary information has been disclosed, it's time to turn to how we can fight these statistics and, improve your quality of life starting right now. There is good news and the good news is that it's never too late to do something about it!



A common goal for cancer patients as a whole would be to improve quality of life by maximising functions affected by the disease and its therapy. It's no mystery that certain therapies, such as Chemotherapy and Radiation zap out a substantial amount of energy and overall well being. Recent research has shown, however, that physical exercise is becoming a prescription for rehabilitation intervention for cancer survivors during and following cancer therapy and is creating quite a stir!

The International Journal of Medical Sciences notes that in people with cancer, exercise has been shown to improve fitness and physical functioning, reduces fatigue, increases mood and modestly decreases body fat. The journal also mentions as a preventative, increased physical activity actually decreases the risk for several common cancers, which is relevant to cancer survivors who are at increased risk for new primary cancers. Findings from the University of Alberta demonstrated that Cancer patients who exercise benefit from reduced pain and nausea, improved cardiovascular endurance and muscular strength, reduced pain and fatigue, and improved ability to work outside the home and perform day-to-day duties; they are less likely to suffer from depression and anxiety and benefit from social interaction in exercise. All this from simply going for a regular evening walk, swimming in a non-chlorinated pool, or doing resistance exercises in a gym, etc.!

And there is no shortage of fit role models who help prove the point for cancer survivors: American cyclist Lance Armstrong overcame testicular cancer and has won seven consecutive Tour de France titles. Even more inspirational is that Lance has recently reported that he is coming out of retirement to try for an eighth win! How is that for motivation! Also, NHL stars Mario Lemieux and Saku Koivu have both beaten cancer and returned to professional sports. A lot of those guys, like Mario and Lance, say part of their motivation is to be a role model, that cancer is not a death sentence. You can still have a very active and vigorous life.

Indeed, with the help lifestyle changes including diet and exercise, the right kind of motivational support of friends and family (and even sports stars!), and the right amount of determination, the statistics noted at the beginning of this article can be one of little relevance. It would certainly be wonderful to note the decline in incidence of the Canadian stats relating to Cancer diagnosis don't you think? The good news is it can be done with increased knowledge of how to improve health one step at a time. Prevention is key, but knowing that the more we can change our lifestyle to one of a more positive outlook, the more beneficial it will be to us, as well as the most important of all, better quality of life and the ability to perform activities of daily living on our own.

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