



**SARAH CANNON**  
Cancer Institute



# Introduction to Cancer Wellness for the New Patient



## **Cancer Support Program**

Being diagnosed with cancer can be scary and uncertain. You may have questions on what to do or eat during or after cancer treatments. You may be wondering if you can still work in your yard, take care of your home or continue to work.

For these questions and other physical, emotional, nutritional or practical needs, we have a comprehensive cancer support program to help you living with, through, and beyond cancer. Our cancer support program including cancer wellness and cancer survivorship, focuses on the needs of patients and caregivers with information, education, resources and connection.

We provide wellness services as part of cancer support. Wellness generally includes your function, fitness, energy, nutrition, emotional well-being, and other practical resource ideas. Increasing evidence has identified the importance of these strategies to decrease stress and improve well-being in the fight against cancer. Our wellness program will help provide you with simple strategies, resources and recommendations that consider your cancer and personal needs.



Staffed by wellness coordinators who collaborate with your physician, clinical team, and other support staff, we provide you with a personalized wellness strategy anytime during your care.

Studies, including one published by Terri Crudup et al. in the *Journal of Oncology* in 2021, have suggested that integrated wellness programs may be associated with better outcomes for cancer patients.

Use this guide as a resource to get you started today on your wellness journey.

## WELLNESS

### PILLARS



**Exercise**



**Nutrition**



**Recovery**



## Nutrition

Nutrition is an essential part of your cancer treatment and recovery. Food is the fuel to assist your body in repairing tissues and maintaining your energy. What you eat after a cancer diagnosis helps your cells and tissues heal, maintain healthy body weight and composition, and provide crucial nutrients for your body's functions such as digestion, cognition and even strength.

No matter how far out you are from a cancer diagnosis or living with a metastatic diagnosis, nutrition matters to how you feel and your body will feel.

While there is not specifically a “cancer diet,” consume as many minimally processed foods with an emphasis on fruits, vegetables, whole grains, beans, nuts, and seeds that are packed with nutrients. Poultry, fish, eggs, and low-fat or fat-free dairy products are encouraged for extra protein. Reduce red and processed meats, crackers, cookies, and other pre-packaged baked goods.





## Try these simple strategies for simple meals and snacks:



- Pantry staples such as quick-cooked rice or grains that come in a pouch to reheat can be simple and tasty.
- Use canned beans as extra sources of protein and fiber such as on salads, in a tortilla or mixed into pasta sauce or used to thicken soup.
- Peanut butter and whole-grain crackers can be simple and satisfying snacks. Check out your peanut butter label for no sugar added options.
- Frozen fruits, vegetables, pre-cooked chicken or fish, and single-serving meals can be simple, easy, and stocked up when items are on sale.
- Many dairy products are versatile and include ample protein. Plain Greek yogurt with ranch seasoning makes a tasty vegetable dip, used as a replacement for sour cream or with some added honey and cinnamon for a sweet treat.



## General Nutrition Tips:

- Make a goal daily to consume at least three palm-sized servings of protein, especially during treatments when your body needs to heal.
- Use protein supplementation when needed for simple portable options. We encourage you to talk to a dietitian about recommendations.
- Try to eat small meals throughout the day and stay hydrated by drinking at least 64 ounces of water or non-caffeinated beverages daily.
- As your taste buds change, you may need to add seasoning to your foods, or use honey or other sweeteners for taste.

If you have been taking any supplements before your cancer diagnosis, it's important to discuss these with your oncology team. Taking most supplements during treatment is not recommended as they could counteract some of the medicines you will be taking.

## Physical Activity & Exercise

Regular physical activity and a planned exercise regimen are essential to reduce the impact of fatigue, maintain your function and provide you with a burst of positive mental well-being.

### The recommendations for cancer survivors from diagnosis are:

- Avoid or reduce inactivity. Try to move for one minute each hour you are awake.
- Include a planned weekly exercise regimen to accumulate up to 150 minutes of moderate physical activity, including two full days of resistance or muscle-building exercise.

### How much activity do I need?

#### Moderate-intensity aerobic activity

Anything that gets your heart beating faster counts.



#### Muscle-strengthening activity

Do activities that make your muscles work harder than usual.



Tight on time this week?

**Start with just 5 minutes each day.** It all adds up.

Modifying activity and exercise during treatment is normal based on how you feel. Keep in mind that something is better than nothing!

## Use the ACTive template to get started!

ACTive has three categories that use your current activity level and experience to find a great place to start. Once you identify a category, try one of the sample days. Each sample day is a no equipment needed home exercise option.

The three categories are **Action**, **Challenge** and **Train**.

**You might not be ready for 150 minutes of moderate or 75 minutes of vigorous activity. Here are some ideas for an exercise plan for different starting points.**



### **Active (A)**

If you are new to exercise or have been mostly sedentary or inactive (sitting for 50% or more of the day on most days) in the last 3 months, the Active program is the place for you. Start with 10-15 minutes of daily planned exercise. These sessions can be broken up into shorter sessions if needed.



**Challenge (C)** If you have exercised prior to cancer or are generally active, start with the Challenge program. Using a combination of aerobic, resistance, and core/balance exercises, start with 15 minute moderate intensity sessions, working up to 30 minutes 5 times per week.



**Train (T)** If you are generally active, focus on meeting the guidelines for moderate or vigorous + strength each week. Work up to vigorous intensity exercise.

If you are unable or feel unsafe to complete the Action level of exercises and/or experience pain or limited range of motion with any of these exercises, we recommend a referral to rehabilitation for assistance.

## Want some exercise ideas to get started in each of the ACTIVE categories?

### Aerobic Exercises

Sometimes called “cardio”, these movements increase your heart rate. You will have to breathe harder during these exercises. This category includes walking, cycling, swimming, and dancing. Here are some other ideas:



**Seated march:** Sitting in a chair with good posture, bring your knees up and down like you are marching. Begin to add your arms into this motion. Keep your chest tall. The bigger the motion the more intensity.



**Stair climbs:** Going up and down a flight of stairs is a great aerobic workout for the Challenge and Train group. Use a handrail for safety if needed.





## Core Exercises

These exercises strengthen your abdominal and back muscles. Simply sitting or standing with good posture is a core exercise.

**A**

**Shoulder blade squeeze:** Try squeezing your shoulder blades together 10 times while sitting, standing or walking.



**C** **T**

**Clamshell:** Pull in your belly button while you lift your top knee toward the ceiling while your feet are together. Slowly lower the knee. Repeat 10 times.



**Bridge:** Lying on your bed or the floor with your knees bent, lift your hips up to the ceiling and squeeze your buttock muscles 10 times.





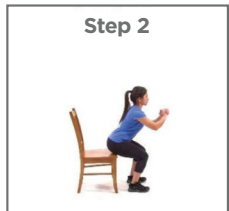
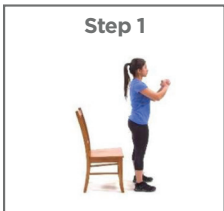
## Resistance Exercises

Resistance training is movement that creates muscular fatigue. Working with weights or exercise bands is one way to build strength. Here are some ideas that don't require equipment:

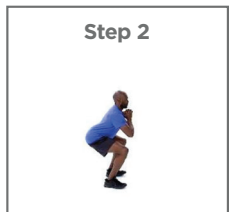
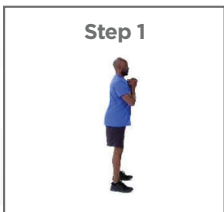
- A** **Seated leg raise:** Sitting in a chair with good posture, kick one leg out to straight in front of you, pause and lower it back down. Repeat. Press your arms overhead as straight as you are able.



- A** **C** **Sit-to-stand:** Start at the front of a firm chair, move from a seated to standing position (using the chair arms or hands on our thighs as needed). Stand as tall as you can, tightening your buttocks.

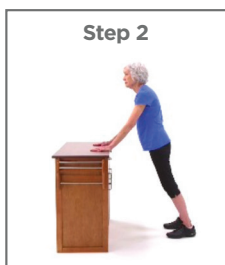
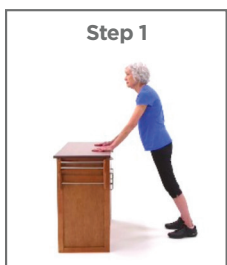


- C** **T** **Squats:** A low squat is a more intense version of the sit-to-stand described above.





**Push-ups:** If you aren't ready for standard push-ups from the floor, try putting your hands on a wall or countertop - complete 5 or more of these in a row and you have just completed a muscle-building resistance training exercise!



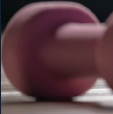
**Lunges:** Switch legs as you step forward into a lunge. Try doing reverse lunges, taking a step backward to work a different set of muscles.



**Mixing it up is key.** Use a mix of aerobic, resistance, core, and balance exercises. Some ideas of each are listed below, but these are general guidelines.

**The best exercise plan contains movements and activities that you enjoy.**

**Next, follow the chart below for some sample exercise plans and ideas of where to get extra help.**



	Action
<b>Current Activity &amp; Exercise Status</b>	<p><b>More than 3 months of inconsistent activity OR limited experience.</b></p> <p>High amounts of fatigue and challenges with activities of daily living or balance.</p> <p>New or progressive bone metastasis.</p>
<b>GOAL</b>	<p>To decrease sedentary behavior, begin or resume a planned exercise plan.</p> <p>Improve day to day function and energy.</p>
<b>Implementation</b>	<p>Start with small daily session of 5-10 minutes of exercise.</p> <p>Focus on posture and balance by spending 5 minutes each day either seated or standing with good posture. Chest elevated, shoulders pulled back, chin level with the floor. Pull your belly button into your spine to engage your muscles.</p>



## Challenge

**Exercised prior to cancer and generally active. Limited balance or joint pain difficulty.**

General knowledge of exercise.

To increase strength and endurance. Add skeletal muscle mass, improve function and metabolism.

Start with 15-minute exercise sessions alternating aerobic and strength. Work towards incorporating these together and increasing daily exercise to 20-30 minutes to reach recommendations.

## Train

**If you are generally active and have a regular exercise routine, focus on meeting the exercise guidelines.**

Focus on consistent moderate exercise.

Meet exercise guidelines for aerobic and strength exercise.

Have a variety of movements including full body strength, core and aerobic each week.

Plan 5 days per week of 30 minutes of exercise. Include some aerobic exercise into your resistance training days by increasing the heart rate.

\*see below for resistance and full body functional sample days.

*Disclaimer: This program provides exercises related to your condition that you can perform at home. As there is a risk of injury with any activity use caution when performing exercises. If you experience any pain or discomfort discontinue the exercises and contact your healthcare provider.*

# Sample Day 1

## Action

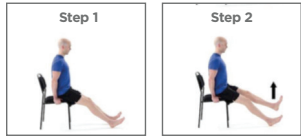
Seated at the edge of your chair, sit with tall posture for 1 min. Then complete:

**10 straight leg lifts** on each side,

**10 overhead press to the ceiling** and

**10 sit to stands** going from a seated to standing posture. Make sure to stand up fully!

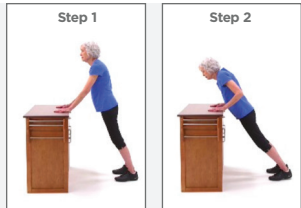
Rest & Repeat. Start with tall posture trying to increase this to 2 minutes.



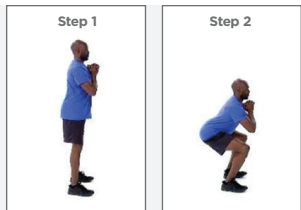
## Challenge

Complete 5 rounds of this full body kitchen workout:

- 10 countertop push ups



- 10 body weight squats (position yourself near the sink for firm grip)



- 10 standing lunges on each side



- 30 second plank on elbows



Rest up to one minute between rounds.



# Train

Complete 10 repetitions of each exercise followed by a quick break and repeat for 5 rounds:

- **Full Squat**

Step 1



Step 2



- **Push up (counter or chair)**

Step 1



Step 2



- **Single Leg Balance**

Stand at a counter for balance as needed. Lift one leg and hold this position. Goal = 10+ seconds on each leg.

Step 1



Step 2



- **Suitcase Carry**

Pick up a weight/kettlebell/shopping bag by bending at the hips/knees-not your back. Maintain upright posture with shoulder blades pulled back. Walk forward across the room and back.



- **Lateral Lunge**



- **Seated torso rotation**



## Set your timer for just one minute and grab a “snack!”

### 1. **Punch it out.**

Seated or standing – alternate air-punching, adding as much torso rotation as feels good to your body.

### 2. **Engage your glutes.**

Engage your glutes by squeezing your buttock muscles and holding for one count. Relax and repeat. You can do this lying, seated or standing.

### 3. **Reach it up.**

Reach your arms as tall as possible, trying to get the inside of your upper arm near your ears. Try turning your thumbs towards the back to engage some of your shoulder rotator muscles.



### 4. **Squeeze and relax.**

Squeeze your hands into fists and extend your fingers out as wide as possible. You can add a stress ball or a small towel for increased resistance.



### 5. **Flex and point.**

Flex your toes as close to your shins as possible, then point them until you feel a stretch in the muscles. You can also do this by standing, lifting your toes, and rocking back to your heels.



6. **Get your march on.**

No need to run to get the benefit! March in place using as large of movements as you can. Make sure you sit or stand up tall to engage your core muscles.



7. **Off to the side.**

Moving laterally or sideways is a great way to engage many supportive muscles in our legs and core. Stand at your counter and take two (or more) steps to one side, keep your toes pointing forward. Go the other direction. If you feel comfortable with your balance, try to do this without holding on.

8. **Gain balance by trying each of these foot positions.**

Start by standing close to a countertop or wall. Stand with your feet shoulder apart, then step your right foot forward and then switch. Next, try this with your feet in one line (like a tightrope). Finally – can you stand on one leg for 10 seconds? Use support as needed!

START WITH YOUR FEET TOGETHER



MOVE ONE FOOT BACK



MOVE ONE FOOT IN FRONT OF THE OTHER



9. **Shoulder blade squeeze.**

Use this move to engage the smaller muscles of the upper back. Squeeze your shoulder blades together, pulse them five times and relax. Repeat. Try doing this with your arms extended out front like a mummy to engage the chest and shoulders.

10. **Push it.**

Using a countertop, place your arms shoulder-width apart and take a small step back. Lower your chest to the counter's edge, keep your elbows in, keep your body straight, and press back to your starting position. Repeat.





## Reminders for Exercise

Even small amounts of exercise positively affect depression, anxiety, sleep quality, memory, and many other quality-of-life concerns. If you are tired, stick to lower intensity or seated exercise.

No matter what level you move, a quick 10 minutes of daily exercise will boost your mood, improve cognition, and extend your life. No need to run a marathon, literally or figuratively. We can achieve benefits with much smaller, more manageable amounts.

Cancer treatments and surgeries can impact your physical function and exercise capacity due to changes in lifestyle and limitations in inactivity. Many different reasons can contribute, including feeling poorly, recovery time from surgeries and treatments, and changes in nutrition status.

## Emotional Well-Being

It's very common to have emotional feelings related to your diagnosis including fear, worry, anxiety, and depression. If you are a caregiver, you may also be experiencing many of these emotions. These emotions may happen throughout your day, much like a roller coaster, or you may feel days or weeks where you are feeling consistently one way.

If you need help, there are teams of experts who understand how cancer affects a person and their loved ones.

Emotional support can include counseling, education, spiritual support, group support, and other services. These services are available through psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, licensed counselors, or pastoral counselors. These individuals can help discuss concerns, offer support and strategies, and refer you to other types of support as needed.







## Here are some well-being strategies to try.

### Express your feelings

- Allow yourself to feel many different emotions. Cancer creates many different feelings, from anger to anxiety and depression. People have found that when they express strong emotions. They're more able to let go of them.
- Some individuals sort out their feelings by talking to friends or family, other cancer survivors, a support group, or a counselor.
- Journaling is an excellent habit to express your feelings. Journaling can provide clarity and help you to understand your thoughts and feelings. Journaling offers emotional release and a safe space to explore different feelings.

*TIP - Write down your current feelings. Explore the thoughts behind each feeling.*



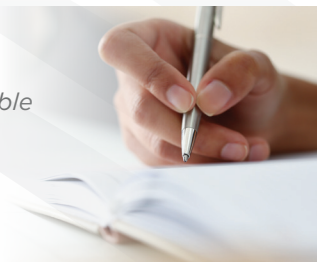
### **Self-care is vital during treatment.**

- Taking care of your body, mind, and soul during treatment is a good idea. Many different activities define self-care. Such as taking a hot bath, walking, reading a book, meditating, and getting enough sleep.
- Allow yourself to say “no” to activities to guard your self-care time.
- You can create self-care plans. Find what makes you feel relaxed and take time each day to engage in self-care.

*TIP: write down a list of your favorite relaxing activities. Use this list to create your self-care plan.*

### **Remain engaged in activities and hobbies you enjoy doing. Try to engage in one thing each day from your pleasure and task lists.**

*TIP: write down three activities that you enjoy. Use this list daily and try to do at least one enjoyable activity for 15 minutes each day.*



**Having a support system, community or resources is very beneficial. While this means different things to each of us, here are some ideas for how to find support.**

- Identify a support system. Support can come in many different forms. Examples include family and friends, co-workers, religious organizations, and support groups which can be in person or offered virtually.
- Assess and state your needs or desires. People in your life often want to be supportive but are unsure how to help. You can be specific in asking for the help you need during treatment, such as a ride, help with a household task, a lunch date, or an exercise partner.
- Engaging your support system can help create a sense of normalcy, help complete tasks, and create a safe person or group to express your emotions.





### **Don't blame yourself for your cancer.**

Patients often express sadness or anger over why they have cancer, and it's important to state that while we know some things about how cancer happens, a large portion of cancer we are still trying to understand.

### **Try to remain hopeful and keep a generally positive mindset.**

Keep up a regular wake-to-rest schedule and keep a consistent sleep regimen.

### **Ask us for tips and strategies on mindset, relaxation, and sleep.**

If you have difficulty with function and balance, talk to your clinical team or a wellness coordinator about a referral to oncology rehab.

**Connect with the Cancer  
Wellness Team for  
any personal wellness  
questions or to meet with a  
member of our team.**

The Cancer Wellness Team:  
(816) 276-3213  
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