

## Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

Effort level	Exercise level
0	nothing
0.5	very, very low
1	very low
2	low
3	moderate
4	somewhat high
5	high
6	
7	very high
8	
9	very, very high
10	maximal exertion

To properly measure intensity, observe your ability to speak as well as your physical symptoms. For example:

- Is it **easy** for you to speak during the physical activity?
- Does it take **little effort** for you to do the physical activity?
- If so, the intensity is **light**
- Is it a **little difficult** for you to speak during the physical activity?
- Does it take **some effort** for you to do the physical activity?
- If so, the intensity is **moderate**
- Is it **difficult** for you to speak during the physical activity?
- Does it take a **great deal of effort** for you to do the physical activity?
- If so, the intensity is **vigorous**



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**Sources:** 1. Moore, S.C., *et al.*, Association of Leisure-Time Physical Activity With Risk of 26 Types of Cancer in 1.44 Million Adults. *JAMA Intern Med*, 2016. 176(6): p. 816–25. 2. Campbell, K.L., *et al.*, Exercise Guidelines for Cancer Survivors: Consensus Statement from International Multidisciplinary Roundtable. *Med Sci Sports Exerc*, 2019. 51(11): p. 2375–2390. 3. Borg, G.A.V., Psychophysical bases of perceived exertion. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, 1982. 14(5): p. 377–381. 4. Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Adults aged 18–64 years: An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behaviour, and Sleep., *C.S.f.E. Physiology*, Editor. 2020.



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## Being active during TREATMENT

This factsheet is for people receiving cancer treatment. It promotes an active, safe, and adapted lifestyle during treatment. It is also meant to support people's autonomy, especially if they do not have access to an exercise professional specialized in cancer.

Ready to exercise on your own? Here are some tips and tools to help you.

## Why be active?

Being active during cancer treatments is safe and recommended<sup>2</sup>. Physical activity helps to optimize physical and mental health, as well as prevent the development of chronic diseases and certain cancers<sup>1</sup>.

By being mindful of your abilities on any given day, you can incorporate physical activity into your routine, even if you do not have access to an exercise professional specialized in cancer.

**TAKEAWAY:** Physical activity during treatment is safe and recommended.

Cancer treatments and surgeries have a significant impact on a person's body and well-being. Being active can help to maintain or improve physical abilities and alleviate some of the side effects of treatment, such as fatigue, pain, stress, and anxiety. Physical activity can facilitate a return to daily life activities after cancer and improve quality of life and mental health.

## How to begin?

So, where should you start? Here are a few examples of physical activities that you can incorporate into your routine: walking on different types of surfaces (e.g., flat, uneven, forest trails), biking (road or stationary), stretching, strength training, dancing, and yoga. Choose physical activities that appeal to you. This will go a long way to helping you build a habit and have fun at the same time!

When you are active during cancer treatment, it is normal for your abilities to be different from before and to vary from day to day. The important thing is to adjust the intensity and type of physical activity to suit your abilities. Even the shortest physical activities are beneficial to your health. Try to do a little bit each day—this will help you maintain your routine and avoid inactivity.



## Recommendations

You should aim for at least three 30-minute sessions of aerobic activity (e.g., walking, dancing, jogging) every week. Two sessions per week of strength training (e.g., light weight training, yin yoga, pilates) are also suggested. Light stretching can be done every day. Always listen to your body and consider these recommendations as a goal that you work towards gradually<sup>2</sup>.

**TIP:** You can also divide the physical activity time into several short sessions throughout the day.

## Which intensity?

During your treatments, you should choose **light to moderate** intensity physical activities. Use the perceived exertion scale in this factsheet to measure the intensity of your physical activity<sup>3</sup>.

To adjust the intensity, you can change the **type, duration** and/or **frequency** of the physical activity. You can do light intensity physical activities, such as slow walking, every day. During treatment, it is normal for your abilities to vary from day to day. A physical activity that was light yesterday may be moderate today. Adjust your physical activity accordingly. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, consider the other things you have planned for the day. Listen to your body.

**TAKEAWAY:** The important thing is for you to move and listen to your body.

## Safety\*

Physical activity during treatment is safe. However, keep an eye out for specific signs. It is best to stop and postpone physical activity if you feel:

- Pain
- Extreme fatigue
- Nausea
- Vertigo or dizziness
- Shortness of breath or wheezing
- Palpitations or chest pain

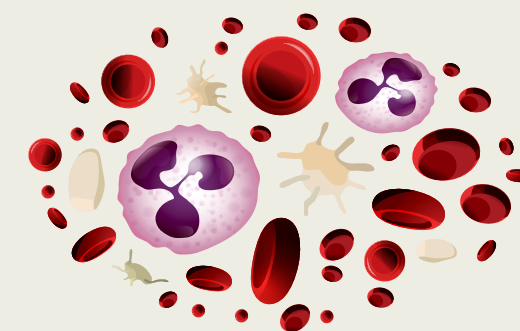
\*Talk to a doctor if you have more than one of these symptoms, if they persist, or if they worry you.



## Be mindful if:

**Your platelet levels are low.** Avoid activities where you might fall and do not hold your breath during a physical activity. It is best to:

- Choose low impact physical activities (e.g., walking, yoga, tai chi, etc.)
- Clear the floor and space around you (e.g., keep away from pets and furniture)



**Your neutrophil levels are low.** Avoid fabric items, wash them before use, and wash your hands after the physical activity. It is best to:

- Choose non-porous objects (eg., plastic, metal)
- Choose individual physical activities at home

**Your hemoglobin levels are low.** Avoid high intensity physical activities, bending over, or holding your breath (e.g., during weight training). It is best to:

- Choose low intensity physical activities that require little moving around
- Allow for rest periods and watch for signs of fatigue (e.g., faster breathing or difficulty completing a movement)

**Your blood sugar is low,** and it is not possible for you to eat (e.g., because of blood tests). Avoid moderate and high intensity physical activities (eg., stairs, moving quickly, sustained effort, etc.). It is best to:

- Postpone more intense physical activities until after you have eaten
- Choose light intensity physical activities (eg., seated, on the floor, etc.)

## Minimize sedentary activities

As much as possible, limit screen time to no more than three hours per day and take frequent breaks during long periods of sitting<sup>4</sup>.

To reduce sedentary periods, try walking when you're on the phone, standing at the computer, and getting up during TV commercials or between episodes of your favourite shows.

## Active transportation

Active transportation is one way of increasing your daily amount of physical activity. Try walking or biking to get around, or take the bus or subway, and, if possible, get off one station earlier. You can also take the stairs instead of the elevator or park one block further away from your destination.

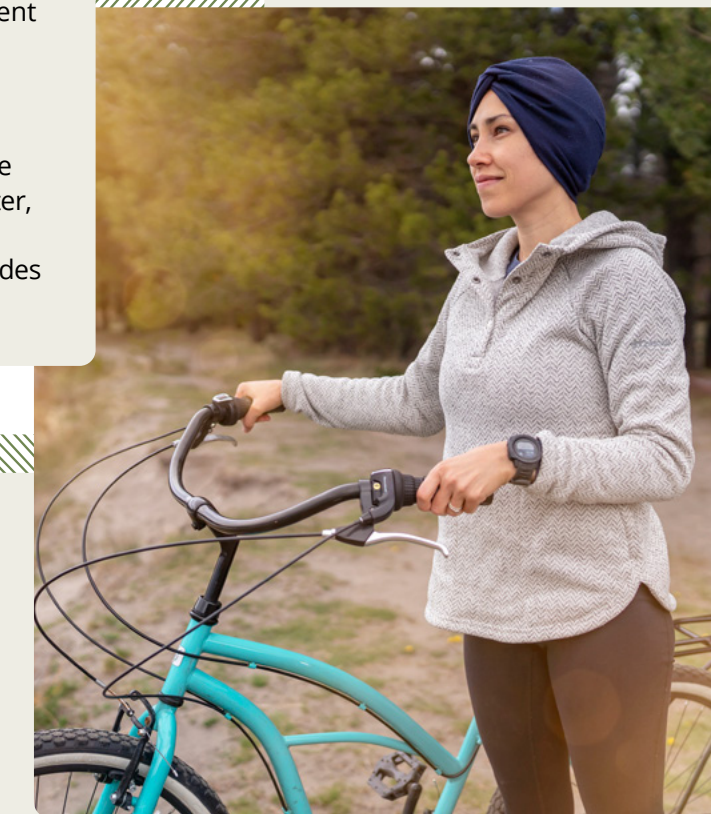
## Sleep

During treatment, it is normal to need a lot of sleep, even during the day, and even with a full night's sleep (seven to nine hours)<sup>4</sup>. Feel free to take naps if you need to.



## Drink water

Try to always have a water bottle on hand. It is important to stay hydrated when you're active, especially during treatment.



## Doctor's guidance

It is important to talk with your attending physician about other recommendations for you and adapt the level and type of physical activity that you can do. If possible, meet with a cancer and exercise professional specialist for support that is adapted and specific to your needs.