

# EXERCISE AND LIFE AFTER CANCER



After treatment for pediatric cancer, some may encounter obstacles to getting back to their day-to-day activities, while some may have even lost certain skills they had before. Others may still be experiencing health issues stemming from their medical condition or the care they received.

During and after cancer treatments, daily physical activity can be integrated in a safe manner.

Exercise can improve muscle strength and cardiovascular endurance, in addition to maintaining healthy body weight. It's also a way to slowly ease into day-to-day life. Being active will help reduce fatigue, improve quality of life, maintain heart health, improve functional abilities, maintain or improve flexibility, and help maintain the bone health.

But where do you even start? Begin by choosing an activity that interests you. Your focus should be on learning what you can do, customizing the activity to you, and building towards a routine.

This leaflet is for children, teens, and young adults who have been affected by blood cancer, as well as their families. It promotes an active, safe, and adapted lifestyle during and after treatment.





## Recommendations

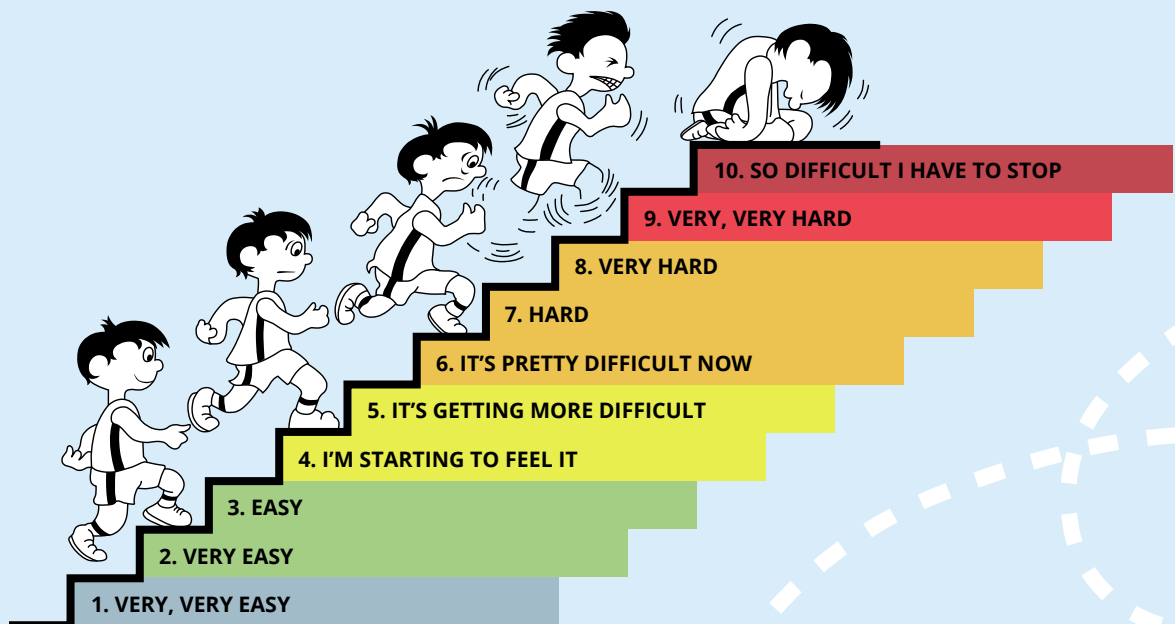
Experts say you should be active at least 60 minutes a day. This can be divided into several short periods throughout the day.

For teens and young adults, it's recommended that you set aside 2 times a week for strengthening (i.e., weights, yoga, Pilates, etc.).

The intensity of the activity can vary from moderate to vigorous. Use the following scale to help you measure fatigue.

## Borg Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale (0-10)<sup>3</sup>

10	<i>exhaustion</i>
9	<i>very, very hard</i>
8	<i>very hard</i>
7	<i>hard</i>
6	<i>somewhat hard</i>
5	<i>moderate</i>
4	<i>fairly light</i>
3	<i>light</i>
2	<i>very light</i>
1	<i>very, very light</i>
0	<i>at rest</i>



An easy way to get a handle on physical exertion levels is by paying attention to breathing and the ability to speak during exercise:

- Is it getting difficult to speak? That means the level of physical exertion is moderate.
- Is it hard to hold a conversation? That usually indicates that the intensity level is high.

High-intensity exercise is important, but it should be briefer and less frequent than light-to-moderate exertion activities. Moderate-intensity exercise can be done every day.



### **Moderate-intensity activities:**

- Walking on a flat surface
- Low-intensity cycling
- Baseball
- Yoga
- Fishing
- Gardening

### **High-intensity activities:**

- Running
- Swimming (laps)
- Aerobics class
- Hockey
- Soccer
- Basketball
- Dance

### **Where to get started?**

The focus should be on what a person is interested in and what a person can do, customizing the activity accordingly, and starting to build towards a routine.

### **Safety**

Physical activity is safe as long as you look out for certain signs. Stop exercising as soon as you experience:

- nausea
- the onset of pain or increasing discomfort
- dizziness or vertigo
- palpitations or chest pain



## Make every step count

Adding brisk movement is one way of increasing your daily amount of physical activity (walking, climbing stairs, cycling, etc.).



## Sleep

Especially during growth periods, it is normal to need a lot of sleep, even during the day. Take the time to sleep as needed.



## Drinking water is important!

Always have a water bottle with you. It is important to stay hydrated when you're active, especially during treatment.



## Minimize sedentary activities

You should have no more than two hours of seated activities during the day. For example: games on tablets or cell phones, TV shows and movies, reading, etc.

## Doctor's guidance

It is important to discuss other recommendations with your attending physician and adapt the level and type of physical activity you will be able to do.



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**Sources:** 1. Canadian 24-Hour Movement Guidelines for Children and Youth. Guideline Development Report 2016: An Integration of Physical Activity, Sedentary Behavior, and Sleep. Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology. 2. Duhamel, G. *et al.* 2020. Systematic Review of Physical Activity Prescription with Pediatric Oncology Patients Towards Recommendations. Accepted before publication. 3. Lazaar, N. *et al.* 2004. Modalities of Submaximal Exercises on Ratings of Perceived Exertion by Young Girls: A Pilot Study. *Perceptual and Motor Skills*, 99 (3\_suppl), 1091–1096. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pms.99.3f.1091-1096>

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