

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**



Gabrielle Duhamel



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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 AFTER CANCER

This factsheet is for people who have completed their cancer treatment. It promotes an active, safe, and adapted lifestyle after treatment. It is also meant to support people's autonomy, especially if they do not have access to a fitness professional specializing in cancer.

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



Why be active?

After the treatments, several difficulties can arise. Some people have reduced abilities or new health conditions due to treatment and surgery.

Physical activity is safe and recommended during and after treatment². By being mindful of your abilities on any given day, you can incorporate physical activity into your routine, even if you are not under the care of a fitness professional specializing in cancer.

Being active gradually improves your abilities and helps you return to daily activities. Physical activity can also help reduce your fatigue and improve your quality of life and mental health.

TAKEAWAY: Physical activity after cancer is safe and makes it easier to return to daily activities.

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?

What physical activities should you add to your routine? Here are a few examples: strength training, cycling, walking, team or individual sports, dancing, yoga, and tai chi. 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! You can change your route, exercise on different types of terrain, or try new physical activities to add some variety. The important thing is to assess your abilities for the day and adapt the physical activity accordingly.

When you are active, 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 good for your health. Ideally, try to **do a little bit each day**—this will help you maintain your routine and avoid inactivity.

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

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 gradually².

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

Which intensity?

When you are active, you should choose **light to vigorous** intensity physical activities. Use the perceived exertion scale in this factsheet to measure the intensity of the physical activity³.

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. Even after the treatment, it is normal for your abilities to vary from day to day.

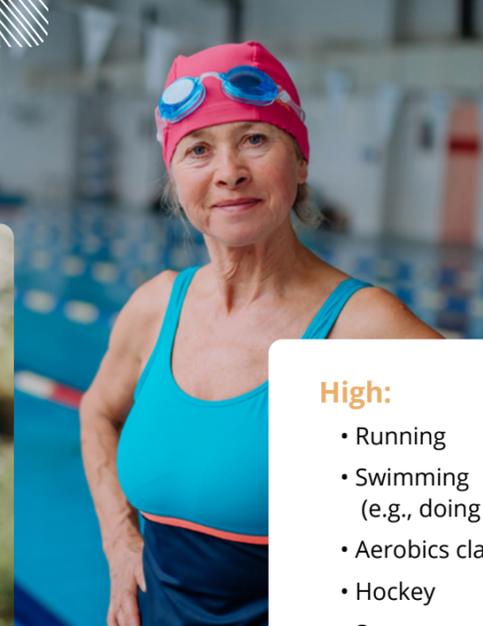
A physical activity that was light yesterday may be moderate today. Adjust your physical activity accordingly. To avoid feeling overwhelmed, consider the other things you have planned for the day.

Listen to your body.

Here are a few examples of physical activities, by intensity:

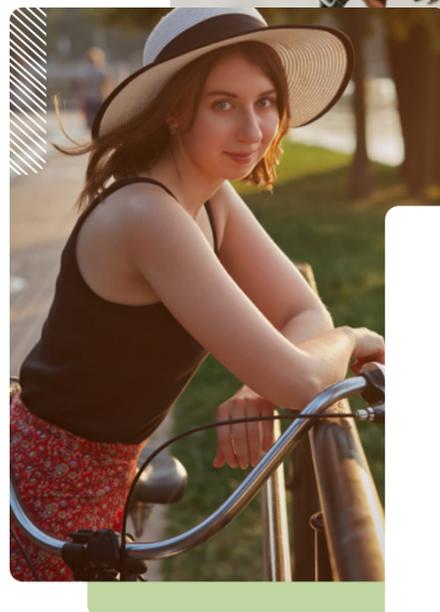
Low:

- Fishing
- Household chores (gardening, cooking, cleaning)
- Walking (slowly, on a flat, smooth surface)



High:

- Running
- Swimming (e.g., doing laps)
- Aerobics class
- Hockey
- Soccer
- Basketball



Moderate:

- Walking (briskly, on a trail, on an uneven surface)
- Cycling
- Baseball
- Yoga
- Dancing
- Weights

Safety*

Physical activity during and after 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.



Sleep

During and after 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)⁴. 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.



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 sitting⁴.

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 cycling 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.

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.