

# Moving Forward After Cancer: A Guide to Physical Activity

**Finishing cancer treatment – whether it was recently or years ago – is an important step forward.**

For many survivors, it also marks the start of a new phase, one that can feel hopeful, uncertain, or even overwhelming. You may notice your body feels different now. You might feel more tired, stiff, or weaker than before. Thinking about being more active can feel like too much, especially if your energy is low. That's okay and you're not alone.

The good news is that even small amounts of physical activity can help you feel better over time, both in your body and in your mind. Your body continues to heal long after treatment ends. Taking a slow, steady approach to movement gives your muscles, joints, heart, and lungs time to adjust safely.



## Why Movement Matters

Being active after cancer can support your health in many meaningful ways:

### More energy and strength

Gentle movement can help you feel stronger and make daily tasks feel more manageable.

### Better quality of life

Many survivors who stay active report improved mood, better sleep, and a greater sense of well-being.

### Less fatigue

Cancer-related fatigue is common and real. Activities like walking or light movement can help reduce ongoing tiredness.

### Easier daily movement

Strength and endurance activities can make everyday actions like climbing stairs, carrying groceries, or playing with grandchildren feel easier.

### Long-term health benefits

Regular movement is linked to a lower risk of heart disease, diabetes, and in some studies, a lower chance of cancer returning.



## You don't have to do it all at once

Getting started does not mean pushing yourself hard or committing to long workouts. The goal is simply to move in ways that fit your body, your energy level, and your life.

### Here are some gentle ways to begin:

#### **Listen to your body**

Some days you may feel stronger than others. Let your energy guide how much you do.

#### **Take short walks**

Even 10–15 minutes a day—or whatever feels doable—can make a difference.

#### **Do what you enjoy**

Gardening, water movement, stretching, or balance exercises all count.

#### **Add light strength work**

Simple exercises using resistance bands, a chair, or your own body weight a couple of times a week can help build strength.

#### **Break it up**

Short bursts of movement throughout the day add up and still provide real benefits.

# BE KIND TO YOURSELF

**Some days will feel easier than others—and that's normal.**

Feeling tired, sore, or unsure is part of the process. No one expects you to return to where you were before cancer or to do everything at once. Starting slowly and listening to your body is not only safe, it's smart.

If you're able, consider talking with your healthcare team, a physical therapist, or an exercise-oncology specialist before starting something new. They can help you find a plan that feels safe, comfortable, and right for you—wherever you are in your survivorship journey.

