

How does exercise affect prostate cancer?

Exercising your options

You have probably heard that exercise can help to lower your risk of developing heart disease and diabetes, but did you know that exercise can also help decrease the risk of prostate cancer? In fact, exercise has been shown to benefit men with prostate cancer during all phases of the disease, by reducing the risk of prostate cancer, preserving and enhancing health during treatment, and improving overall survival.

Decreasing your risks

First off, a growing body of research has examined the relationship between routine physical activity and prostate cancer; a majority of which have found that exercise may actually decrease

the risk of developing prostate cancer. Men may also benefit from initiating an exercise program following a diagnosis and prior to treatment. In other cancers, such as colon and lung cancer, pre-habilitation (that is, engaging in an exercise program before treatment), can actually improve recovery and reduce treatment-related complications. In fact, preliminary research has found that men with prostate cancer who perform pelvic floor muscle exercise before surgery can reduce urinary complications following prostate cancer surgery.

Benefits of exercise

The evidence of benefit for men with prostate cancer is most apparent during treatments like radiation and hormone therapies. These treatments often

make men feel tired and reduce their overall physical fitness. During these treatments, exercise has been shown to improve strength, fatigue, cardiovascular fitness, and quality of life. Clearly, the role of exercise following a prostate cancer diagnosis is important for feelings of physical and emotional wellbeing, but recent research also suggests that it can increase survival as well.

Moving forward

Overall, exercise has many benefits for men with prostate cancer. The American College of Sports Medicine recommends that persons with cancer “avoid inactivity” and work up to 150 minutes a week of aerobic activity (such as brisk walking) and incorporate strength training on 2

days or more per week. Working with an exercise specialist with experience in oncology can help prevent injuries and make sure that the exercises are safe. Men should talk to their physician prior to changing their exercise levels to ensure there is not any individual safety concern.

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