Exercise for Cancer Related Fatigue

By: Carol Eddy, senior physical therapist, Integrative Medicine Center

Cancer treatments often come with difficult, sometimes devastating side effects. Symptoms such as fatigue may not be too bad at the beginning of chemotherapy or radiation treatments, but as treatments continue, fatigue can worsen. You may find yourself starting to limit your daily activities or social interactions. There may be some days when it can even be difficult to get out of bed. The more tired you feel, the less active you are, and your body begins to weaken, making movement even more difficult and tiring. One of the most powerful treatments we have to treat cancer-related fatigue is physical activity.

Sometimes there are medical reasons for feeling fatigued, such as anemia or thyroid dysfunction that medicine can help with. You may be having difficulty sleeping due to treatment with steroids, or you may feel sluggish from pain medication. It may sound counter intuitive, but staying physically active is one of the best ways to reduce the effects of cancer related fatigue. The good news is that, like medicine, exercise can be prescribed and dosed in such a way that is both safe and manageable for someone surviving cancer.

The American College of Sports Medicine has published exercise guidelines for cancer survivors. While they are specific in saying cancer survivors should aim to get at least 150 minutes per week of moderate aerobic activity, as well as at least two days of strength training each week, their strongest recommendation is simply to avoid inactivity. Research in this field clearly indicates that ANY activity is better than none.

Exercise does not have to be exhausting to be effective. It can be done in very small increments of time or effort, at home or wherever you are comfortable, and at an intensity you control so that you can be sure not to over-exert yourself. Here are five simple exercises you can practice at home:

1. Walk for 5-10 minutes around your house or neighborhood, working just hard enough to start breathing a little heavy, but not so hard you cannot have a conversation.
2. Do 10-15 push-ups on a wall or on a counter top, such as in the kitchen.
3. Sit down and stand up repeatedly 10 times in a row.
4. Stand up and march in place during TV commercials.
5. Turn your favorite music on and dance to a song or two.

At the Integrative Medicine Center, our senior physical therapist can evaluate your current fitness level and work to establish a feasible and safe exercise plan to help you manage your fatigue. To make an appointment at the Integrative Medicine Center, ask your MD Anderson physician to submit an online consultation request. For additional details, visit www.mdanderson.org/integrativemed.
### Physical

**Brief Relaxation Massages**  
Experience a brief upper body massage for relaxation. These chair massages are generously funded by Angie’s Spa.

**Get Moving**  
Recharge and energize with uplifting music and a blend of yoga, dance, and martial arts.

**Tai Chi**  
Find balance and strength through continuous flowing movements that link mind to body.

**Shape-Up Circuit***  
A fitness class designed to improve body composition by increasing muscle strength and burning calories. Led by the Integrative Medicine Physical Therapist, this class will follow a “circuit” format, with different exercises at each station. Suitable for any fitness level. Please bring a water bottle.

**Yoga for Fitness**  
A beginning/intermediate level yoga class that focuses on moving through postures with breath.

### Mind-Body

**Music for Health**  
Discover new ways to reduce stress, improve mood, and decrease fatigue! Each week learn a different skill and how to utilize your favorite music to improve your health.

**Tibetan Bon Meditation***  
Relax and access a deeper awareness through connecting your mind, body and heart through breath, sound and movement practices. Class method rotates weekly (see calendar).
- **Power of Breath**  
  Through breath, learn various contemplative stress-relieving methods to use in everyday life.
- **Sacred Sounds**  
  Use sound techniques in combination with the breath, that can be helpful to increase memory and cognitive function.
- **Breath & Movement**  
  Experience meditation through simple movements & breathing techniques, supportive of better sleep.

**Therapeutic Group Drumming**  
Learn drumming techniques from around the world. Express yourself in a safe creative music making environment. No experience required!

**Yoga for Health**  
Features a gentle form of yoga including stretching, breathing, relaxation, and meditation techniques.

**Qigong**  
Experience this ancient Chinese system of self-care using meditation, breath, and movement to balance the body’s energy flow.

### Social

**Singing Support Group**  
A support group for cancer survivors and caregivers who enjoy singing. Come join the fun!

**Laughter for Health**  
Known in the community as “Laughter Yoga” - a blend of deep breathing, stretching and simulated laughter exercises that may help reduce stress. Please bring a water bottle to class.

**Expressive Arts**  
Classes include: Paint Your Own Pottery, Beading Class, Shibori, Chinese Ink Art, and much more! Pre-registration is not required. Underwritten by COLLAGE: The Art of Cancer Network

**Look Good, Feel Better**  
Licensed cosmetologists help patients adjust to temporary or permanent changes in their appearance. MUST pre-register at (713) 792-6039.

**Support Groups**  
Professionally-led support groups provide education, and sharing for patients, family and friends. For a complete list of support groups, please call the Social Work department at (713) 792-6195. Pre-registration is not required.

**P.I.K.N.I.C.**  
An educational forum for patients, caregivers, and staff who want to learn more about issues relevant to cancer. PIKNIC topics may change, please call 800-345-6324 for the latest schedule. Pre-registration is not required.

*Program support provided by the Duncan Family Institute

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**Activity Level:**
- Gentle
- Active
- Very Active

View audio and video resources online: [www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter](http://www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter)
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All classes in blue are for outpatients and their caregivers and are offered at the Mays Clinic location – ACB2.1005
An MD Anderson physician’s order is required before scheduling any of the services listed below.
For additional details, please:
• Call 713-794-4700
• Visit our website http://www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter
• Visit one of our 2 outpatient locations:
  - Main Clinic: R1.2000, a free standing facility east of the Main Building near valet
  - Mays Clinic, 2nd floor near elevator T

Main Clinic Services

Integrative Oncology Consultation
Our physicians and advanced practice providers can give guidance on achieving a comprehensive and integrative approach to your cancer care.

Exercise/Physical Activity Consultation
Being more physically active may benefit patients during and after cancer treatment by decreasing fatigue and improving strength. A senior physical therapist provides recommendations on achieving safe and optimal exercise during each consultation.

Acupuncture
Acupuncture is a safe and often effective medical treatment that can be used to manage side effects from cancer and related treatments, including nausea and vomiting, pain, neuropathy, hot flashes, fatigue and dry mouth. Initial visit fee will range from $85 to $100. Follow-up visits range from $45 to $100.

Oncology Massage Treatment
Oncology massage may help patients address anxiety, relieve pain, decrease fatigue and improve sleep quality. Services are by appointment for patients and their caregivers with a treatment fee of $70.

Mays Clinic Services

Health Psychology Consultation
A licensed clinical psychologist will provide both evaluation and interventions to help with lifestyle change and address symptoms of stress, anxiety and depression.

Music Therapy
Benefits of music therapy include, encouraging self-expression, reducing stress, improving coping skills and implementing protocols to improve cognitive, motor, communications and socialization skills. Initial visit fee is $50. Follow-up visits range from $25 to $50.

Meditation Consultation
Meditation decreases anxiety and negative emotions, improves sleep and memory and increases spiritual awareness and a sense of well-being. Initial visit fee is $50. Follow-up visits range from $25 to $50.

For information on our inpatient services, please call 713-794-4700.

Friends of Integrative Medicine
exists to raise awareness within MD Anderson and the larger Houston community of the important role complementary and integrative medicine can play in cancer prevention and in helping those with cancer live better and longer.

Become a Member Today
Contact Kira Taniguchi at KMTaniguchi@mdanderson.org for membership information.

The Fountain of Joy, which stands in front of the Integrative Medicine Center, was donated by longtime Friend of Integrative Medicine member and patient Joyce Arrington Smith.

“Meditation, Art & Tea: Tasting with Mindfulness”
January 28, 2016
6:30 - 8 p.m.
The Museum of Fine Arts, Houston