Exercise and Physical Activity Consult
Frequently Asked Questions

A Physical Therapist (PT) in the Integrative Medicine Center counsels on the benefits of exercise during and after cancer treatment. The goal is to create a custom plan of exercise. The plan focuses on safety based on your cancer treatment, level of fitness and health goals.

Exercise vs Physical Activity

Think of exercise and physical activity as different from each other. Both are needed for overall good health. Ask your health care team for more information.

- **Exercise**: Exercise is physical activity that is done on purpose, to improve health. For example, it improves strength, balance, endurance, sleep, emotional state and quality of life. Exercise also helps heart, lung and bone health.

- **Physical Activity**: Physical activity is any activity that involves moving the body to burn more energy than at rest. It is often considered exercise if it causes heavy breathing for at least 10 minutes at a time or if it builds muscle strength.

Physical Therapist vs Personal Trainer

- **Personal trainer**: Teaches people how to exercise. Personal trainers often work in a gym or fitness center.

- **Physical Therapist**: A member of your health care team who helps you move better and more safely. People who get therapy are often referred by their doctor for treatment. Usually this is after an illness or injury. Treatments often include exercise and other activities as needed.

Physical Therapy in Rehabilitation (Rehab) vs Integrative Medicine

- **PT in Rehab**: Use exercises and other treatments to help with symptoms that affect daily activities. For example, helping you move your arms better to reach items on a high shelf or pull a shirt over your head. Treatment may require several visits for a number of weeks to reach goals.
• **PT in Integrative Medicine:** Picks up where therapy in rehab stops. This is often when you are ready to begin exercising for overall health. Appointments are not as often. This helps to develop a program that you can carry out on your own. Follow up visits help make the program your own.

**Frequently Asked Questions:**

**What to expect during the first visit?**
- The first visit lasts about 1 hour.
- The PT goes over medical history and checks for:
  - Flexibility
  - Balance
  - Strength
  - Overall fitness
- You will set goals and create a plan
- You will be shown exercises to help get you started. More than likely, you will not have a full exercise session during the first visit.

**What should I wear?**
Wear loose clothes. This allows you to move easily. Think about what you may be asked to do:
- Bend forward
- Move your legs while lying down
- Exercise with or without equipment

**Is it OK to get an exercise consult while in active treatment?**
Yes. Exercise is safe while in active treatment. In fact, it can be one of the best ways to ease symptoms of treatment. A PT will review your health records and create a program that is safe no matter where you are in your cancer treatment.

**Do I need a consult if I am already very active?**
It may be helpful to meet with the physical therapist to go over your current activities. Treatment may have caused changes to your body, such as making you feel more tired. These changes may affect how you respond to moving, even if routine. You may need to change how you exercise. Your PT will make changes as needed.

If interested, ask a member of your health care team to refer you for an Integrative Medicine Consultation.

Integrative Medicine Center
Phone: 713-794-4700
Email: myMDAnderson
Fax: 713-794-4728 Hours:
Monday-Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Website: [www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter](http://www.mdanderson.org/integrativemedcenter)