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Exercise and Breast Cancer Treatment

Cancer treatment isn't for wimps. Surgery can be difficult as can radiation treatment. But of all the common treatments that really seem to knock people for a loop, chemotherapy is tops. Nausea. Fatigue. Hair loss. Fortunately, there are some medications that can help with those side effects, but one of the things that may help the most is exercise. Let's take a look at a study published just this month.

Researchers in Germany put women undergoing chemotherapy on a weight-training program, an endurance program, or continued with standard care that included neither. They were interested in how exercise affected the aerobic capacity, strength, and the patients' quality of life. All women lost aerobic fitness, with the no-exercise group losing the most capacity. Both the aerobic and weight-training groups increased strength during the 12-week program. The weight-training group significantly increased their quality of life the most; those with only standard care declined in their quality of life.



My first thought before I read the study would have been that aerobic exercise would have helped the most; it did help, but not as much as weight training. It may be that because weight training is more localized in stressing muscles, the entire body doesn't have to respond. Whatever the reason, regular exercise helped the women get through the treatment with a better quality of life.

If you can start to exercise before treatment begins, that would be your best bet. If you're already undergoing treatment for breast cancer, I know how tired you are and that adding exercise to the mix sounds counterproductive, but the research shows it's worth the investment in time and energy. Make sure you consult with someone certified to work with people undergoing cancer treatment. As I said Tuesday, physical therapists are a great source for getting guidance to know what to do, and your oncologist probably knows which therapists in your area are most qualified to help.

Tonight is the first [Nutrition During Cancer Treatment](#) webinar. Whether it applies to you or others, consider signing up for tonight's or Monday's webinar.

What are you prepared to do today?

Dr. Chet

Reference: Anticancer Res. 2015 Oct;35(10):5623-9

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