

How to move more **with** breast cancer

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It's not always easy to find the time and resources to create and stick with an exercise plan that's right for you. But in the long run, exercise can help reduce the risk of breast cancer recurrence, improve survival, and help reduce side effects.

Where should I start?

No matter your age or stage, you can find exercises that meet your abilities and allow you to stay active and build strength. If you're in treatment, recovering from surgery, or living with long-term functional issues, it may take time to build up to the recommended exercise levels. Remember, you can start small. Even some movement is better than none!



1. Add purposeful aerobic movement

Purposeful aerobic movement includes activities that slightly increase heart rate and breathing while still allowing comfortable conversation. Regular aerobic activity improves fatigue, mood, sleep quality, and heart health. Try a few kinds of movement, and see which one feels best for where you are:

- Brisk walking or running
- Hiking or climbing intervals
- Cycling, swimming, or other low-impact movement

lbbc.org/BeACTIVE

For patients looking for a starting place for independent movement, LBBC's BeACTIVE series is a free workout program resource that can be modified for most levels of fitness.



2. Build functional strength

Add strength training to complement your aerobic movement as part of a balanced approach:

- **Functional strength training focuses on building muscle** through movements that support daily life. These include: sit-to-stands, squats, step-ups, carries, and band-based pushing and pulling.
- **Aim for 2-3 sessions per week.** Start with as little as 5 minutes or one movement at a time. Gradually progress to full-body sessions with two or more sets of each exercise.
- **Exercises should feel challenging** and lead to tired muscles — not pain. What's important is moving major muscle groups, not perfection.



The important role of strength training

Strength training plays a critical role after breast cancer. Skeletal muscle isn't just about strength — it also burns energy like an engine. Lean muscle supports healthy weight, blood sugar, immune system, bone health, and living independently. Despite these benefits, many people who have had cancer don't do enough strength training. Without it, muscle loss can continue long after treatment. Muscle loss has its own risks, like fatigue, metabolic disease, and losing your mobility.

The takeaway: If we don't intentionally build muscle, we lose it.



3. Supplement with mobility and flexibility

Mobility-focused movement helps with range of motion, joint health, and moving with confidence. Mobility exercises practice controlled movement and stability. Examples include gentle stretching and different types of yoga. Mobility work is a great option for rest days because it supports recovery between strength sessions and helps relieve stiffness.

Independent exercise or supervised exercise?

Most exercise can be done on your own. But the guidance of an exercise professional can help if you're not sure where to start or have specific risk factors like lymphedema, bone mets, balance problems, or heart problems. Studies also show that supervised exercise helps you stay motivated and on track. If cost, time, transportation, or discomfort with exercising in public keep you from moving, talk with your doctor about how you can get started. Remember: **Any movement is better than none at all.**