Cancer Surgery Recovery Guide

A collection of resources for recovering after a cancer surgery.

University of Pittsburgh Doctor of Occupational Therapy Capstone Project:
Bridging Information Gaps

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Cancer Bridges

Every cancer journey is unique.
We are here for you.

Introduction

A guide to get back to *living* after surgery.

This guide was made for people who have had or are planning to have cancer-related surgery.

An important part of recovery is taking care of yourself. Your progress and independence will depend on the type of surgery you have, your overall health, and whether you are having other cancer treatments.

This guide is not meant to be read all at once. Please consider what applies to you and refer to those sections as needed.

Many of the pages in this guide have links attached which lead to other pages that add to information in this guide. Some pages contain optional equipment and tools—these are recommendations and should be purchased and used at your discretion.

Please Note

Every cancer journey is different.

Always consult with your care team to determine what is safe for YOU.

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Communication with Your Care Team

Questions to Ask Before Surgery
When to Contact Your Team After Surgery

THE POWER OF KNOWLEDGE

"You are your own person—the only person that will go through this physically, and you have every right to share and provide yourself with every ounce of control. **Your voice is your power."**

Nina L., non-Hodgkin lymphoma

1

You have the right to ask for details regarding your care.

Your cancer journey is *yours.* You have the right to ask questions and receive answers from your care team. Your care team is capable and willing to answer questions you may have.

2

Go to your appointments with questions ready.

Keep a notebook with you and write down any questions you have before going to your appointment(s). This will lessen the stress of remembering all the questions and/or concerns you have.

3

If possible, bring someone with you to your appointments.

A lot of information is given during appointments. It is not required to have a friend, family member, or caregiver go to appointments with you, but it may help to have someone take notes and listen with you.

(The Patient Story, n.d.)

Questions to Ask Before Surgery About the Recovery Process

Will I be given written information about my after-care?	What problems should I look out for when I go home? Who should I contact if they occur?	Will I have any pain? How will it be managed?
Will I have tubes and drains?	Will I need therapy after surgery? Will I need to stay at a facility?	How often will I need check-ups?
What are the effects of the surgery (e.g., will I be able to work, drive)? Are there any long-term effects?	What kind of support is available to people who have this surgery?	Are there any alternative therapies (e.g., massage, acupuncture) that might help me?
Will I have precautions that stop me from doing certain tasks after my surgery?	Will I need to have a caregiver to help me recover after surgery?	Will I need to change my home environment to support my recovery?

(Cancer Council: Victoria, n.d.)

When to Contact Your Care Team After Surgery

If your instinct tells you your symptoms are serious or life-threatening, ***call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room*. If there is no emergency, call your care team. They always have someone on call—if it is a weekend, do not wait until Monday! You should always be cautious when it comes to your health.

You have a **fever** (check what fever is high enough to call about)	You have **intense chills**, with or without a fever	You are **bleeding** from your surgical site or anywhere else
You are **nauseous** and **vomiting**	You are **short of breath** or have trouble breathing	You have **swelling** in your limbs
You have unusual, **sudden, severe pain** anywhere, including headaches	You have trouble or pain with **urinating**, or bloody, bad-smelling, cloudy urine	You notice **any other signs** mentioned by your care team

You have any **sign of infection** at the site of your surgery: Redness, fever, increased pain or soreness that cannot be relieved, swelling, bad-smelling drainage, increased drainage

(American Cancer Society, n.d.; Cancer Council: Victoria, n.d.)

Showering & Bathing

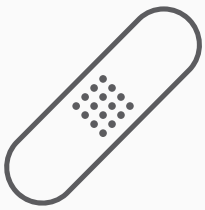
Safety, Tips & Techniques, Optional Equipment & Tools

Showering & Bathing: Safety

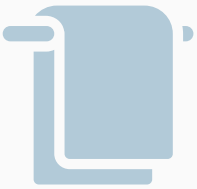
- Safety is the #1 concern during shower/bath time.

- Unless you have been told otherwise by your doctor or medical provider, you should be able to shower following surgery.

- Surgical dressings or bandages may need to be kept dry after bathing. Your nurse should give you instructions and extra supplies at discharge.



- If you are instructed not to shower or do not feel comfortable or safe, sponge bathing is an option.



- When washing your body, be ***gentle***. After bathing, ***pat*** yourself dry.

(Cancer Council, n.d.)

Showering & Bathing: Tips & Techniques

Reduce Standing Time

Sitting requires less energy than standing. Using a shower chair periodically, or during your entire shower can allow your body to rest and enhances safety. You can also sit while drying.

Keep Items Within Reach

You can use ledges or install shelves in order to have all items within reach. Keep your towel and other essential items close by, so you do not have to strain or exert yourself when getting them.

Lower Temperature

Heat can sometimes cause tiredness and inflammation, especially during a shower or bath. Cooler water can help you save energy while bathing

(Wayne State University, n.d.)

Showering & Bathing: Optional Equipment & Tools

Tub Bench

Tub benches can help you get in and out of the shower. They also allow you to stay seated while bathing. They are wider than shower chairs and often extend outside the bathtub.

Shower Chair

Shower chairs allow you to stay seated while bathing. They cannot help you get in and out of the shower.

Long-Handled Sponge

This allows you to wash areas of the body that are hard to reach. It reduces overall effort by limiting the need to reach.

Handheld Showerhead

Handheld showerheads make it easier to bathe while sitting, as it provides control of where the water is going.

(Lange, 2021; Wayne State University, n.d.)

Using the Bathroom

Getting On & Off the Toilet, Optional Equipment & Tools, Incontinence

Using the Bathroom: Getting On & Off the Toilet

Safety

- Make sure there are no obstacles in your pathway to & from the toilet. Turn all lights on and/or use nightlights to illuminate rooms at night. Do not leave thick or slippery bath mats on the floor, as they can catch on your feet.
- Take your time. It is always better to take a little longer & be safe. This might mean sitting on the toilet & catching your breath before standing.
- When getting on the toilet, back up until you feel the toilet against the back of your legs. Sit down slowly & with control.
- If you need something to push off of when getting off the toilet, make sure it is something immoveable like a sink counter, the back of the toilet, or your knees.
- If you use a walker or another mobility device, follow instructions from your care team when getting on & off the toilet.

Demonstration

(The Free OT, n.d.)

Using the Bathroom: Optional Equipment & Tools

Bedside Commode

This is a useful replacement for a toilet after surgery, or it can go in your bedroom for night time use.

Raised Toilet Seat

This fits on, and adds height to, any standard toilet. This can minimize leg bending and help you get on an/off the toilet easier.

Wiping Aid

This is an extended toilet paper handle that can be used for people who have difficulty reaching or limited movement.

Moist Wipes

Moist wipes are a more effective alternative method to wiping than toilet paper.

(Hall, 2018; Lange, 2021)

Incontinence

Definition: *Difficulty holding urine or bowel movements after surgery. It is usually temporary, but contact your care team with concerns.*

Tips & Techniques

Training Your Bladder

- **Schedule Bathroom Visits:** Start by going to the bathroom every hour. Then, slowly increase the time between bathroom breaks. Even if you don't need to go, still use the bathroom at each scheduled time.
- **Delay Bathroom Visits:** When you feel like you need to go, try to hold it for about five minutes. As you get better, try holding it for longer, like 10 minutes. You can try distracting yourself with deep breathing or relaxation techniques.
- **Pelvic Floor Exercises**
  - Learn more about pelvic floor muscle exercises and bladder training here.
  - This is a guide that explains how to do kegel exercises that strengthen your pelvic floor muscles

Change Your Environment

- Set up your bathroom with proper hygiene products such as sanitary pads, adult diapers, etc., so that in the event of an accident you are prepared.
- Pack all necessary bathroom and hygiene products in your purse or bag, so incontinence does not prevent you from going about your day.
- Wear clothing that is easy to remove or has simple fasteners to make it easier when you need to use the bathroom.
- Pull pants over your knees before standing. This will help prevent them from falling to your ankles when you stand up.
- Resource that offers free samples of sanitary products: MedPro Direct

(American Urogynecologic Society, 2016; Hall, 2018; Harvard Medical School, 2022; Rizzo, 2022; Watson, 2023)

Getting Dressed

General Tips & Techniques, Tips & Techniques For Upper & Lower Body Dressing, Optional Equipment & Tools

Getting Dressed: General Tips & Techniques

- Gather your clothes (including socks and shoes) and any dressing aids or mobility equipment if you have them. Place them within reach.
- Choose loose, stretchy, and comfortable clothes that are easy to move in.
- Dress in front of a mirror for visual assistance.
- For your safety and to save energy, sit while you dress and undress.
- If applicable, dress your affected or weaker limb first. Undress your unaffected or stronger limb first.
- Make sure you follow any surgical or medical precautions from your care team when you dress and undress.

(KZN Department of Health, n.d.)

Getting Dressed: Upper & Lower Body Tips & Techniques

Upper Body

- Shirts & bras with front closures are easier to attach if you cannot reach overhead.
- Avoid shirts with tight necks—they are harder to pull on.
- Keep in mind that front-facing fasteners are easier to see & reach.
- Consider wearing clothes without buttons. If you or someone you know can sew, you can replace buttons with Velcro®.
- Hook a typical bra in front, then turn it to the back. Sports bras are an option if you can reach overhead.

Lower Body

- While sitting, put underwear & pants on at the same time so that you only stand up once.
- Before standing, pull pants up over your knees & make sure socks and shoes are on.
- Skirts can be easier to put on than pants.
- Consider wearing low-heeled, slip-on shoes.
- Rest your feet on a footstool to eliminate discomfort with bending down to put on shoes.

(UPMC Hillman Cancer, n.d.)

Getting Dressed: Optional Equipment & Tools

Button Hook/ Zipper Pull

This tool helps to button/ unbutton or zip/unzip clothing when having neuropathy or other fine motor issues.
Link to instructions

Dressing Stick

This device helps to put on or take off shoes, socks, shirts, jackets, and pants. It can also help with pulling up zippers.
Link to instructions

Adaptive Clothing Brands

Sliverts Silverts.com
Clothing for seniors to wear after surgery

Joe and Bella Joeandbella.com
Men's & women's apparel featuring stylish pants & non-skid socks

Athleta: Post-Surgery collection
Athleta.gap.com
Women's post-surgery bras & underwear

The Able Label Theablelabel.com
Men's, women's, & gender-neutral clothing feat. post-surgery clothing with Velcro®

Slick Chicks Slickchicksonline.com
Women's intimate apparel & loungewear

Tommy Adaptive
Usa.tommy.com/en/tommy-adaptive
Tommy Hilfiger's adaptive clothing line for men, women, & kids

(Bellevue Healthcare, 2021; Binson's Medical Equipment, 2018; Star Home Healthcare, n.d.; Vive Health, 2019)

Getting Dressed: Optional Equipment & Tools cont.

Sock Aid

Sock aids (hard/soft) help put on socks without bending. For compression stockings, use a hard sock aid.

Link to instructions

Elastic Shoelaces

Elastic shoelaces allow you to slip your foot into your shoe without bending or tying.

Reacher

A Reacher can be used to pick up clothes that are out of reach. You can also use it to remove socks and pull up pants.

Link to instructions

Long Shoe Horn

A long shoe horn makes it easier to slide your heel into your shoe with little bending.

Link to instructions

(Hendricks Regional Health, 2022; Henry Ford Health, 2019; North Coast Medical, n.d.)

Cooking

Meal Prep, Tips & Techniques, Optional Equipment & Tools

Cooking: Meal Prep

Meal prep before surgery can save time and energy after surgery. It can also help to reduce stress and eat healthier.

When meal prepping, consider the following:

1. How many meals will I make? Will I need to make meals for more than one person?
2. Are the meals I am preparing something I will want to eat for a few days?
3. Do any of these meals have the same ingredients?

Meal Planners

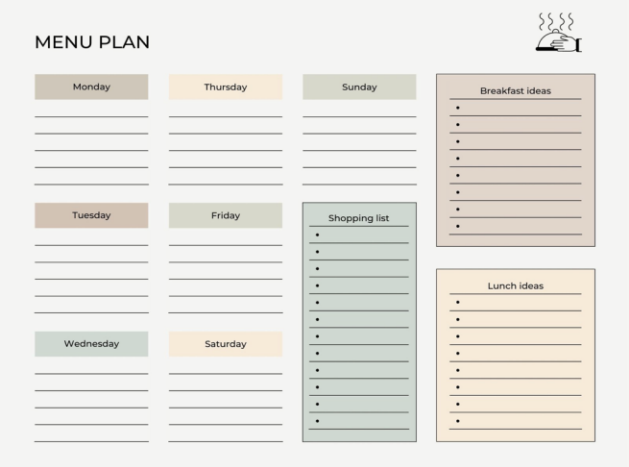
Meal planners can help you plan your meal prep ideas and schedule your meals throughout a day, week, or month. They can also help organize your shopping list.

Examples:

Daily Meal Planner

Weekly Meal Planner

Monthly Meal Planner



Cooking: Tips & Techniques

Saving Energy

- Cook in advance & freeze meals in portion sizes
- Purchase pre-cut food
- Stock up on pantry/freezer food, so you can limit how often you go shopping after surgery
- Use single use tableware to avoid washing dishes often
- Prepare meals sitting down
- Cook & serve in the same container

Heavy Lifting & Reaching

Reminder: *Your care team may limit the amount of weight you can lift and/or carry, and/or how high you can reach.*

- Separate heavy items to smaller portions. For example, if you have a large jug of milk, divide the milk into smaller jars
- Move pots, pans, & other essential kitchen items to counter height surfaces before surgery
- Use lightweight tools with thick handles

Shopping

- Make a shopping list & know where items are located to save time & energy in the store
- Use grocery delivery services (e.g., InstaCart, Uber Eats) to have your shopping done for you & delivered to your door
- Or, use grocery pick-up services to have your shopping done for you & you pick-up at the store (e.g., Target, WholeFoods)
- Use Meals on Wheels services

(American Cancer Society, n.d.)

Cooking:
Optional Equipment & Tools

Can Opener

Can openers can make it easier to twist off the lid.

Learn More

Vegetable Slicer

Vegetable slicers make it easier and save time when cutting fruit and vegetables.

Learn More

Pan Holder

This tool makes it easier to hold a pan if your arms aren't feeling strong or stable.

Learn More

Rocker Knife

This tool can help cut help to cut food items using one hand. This can help if you have trouble using both your arms at the same time.

Learn More

Cooking:
Optional Equipment & Tools

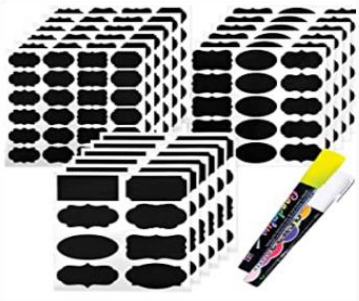
Adaptive Cutting Board

This tool makes chopping food easier by keeping it steady on the cutting board and letting you prepare meals with just one hand.

Rolling Kitchen Cart

This tool helps to save energy when preparing meals by making it easier to transfer items around the kitchen instead of constantly moving around.

Labels



Labels help keep your kitchen organized. Putting labels on items you use a lot or on cabinets can make it easier for you to find what you need.

Stove Knob Turner

A knob turner can help you turn knobs on your stove if it is hard to move or reach your arms.

Household Tasks

Cleaning Tips & Techniques, Laundry Tips & Techniques

Cleaning: Tips & Techniques

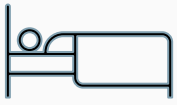
Stock Items

- **Make sure you have everything you may need** at home after surgery (such as wipes, sprays, and sponges).
- **Keep the items in an easy to reach area** such as a countertop.
- Depending on your surgery, your doctor may tell you to limit bending and twisting movements.

Save Your Energy

- **Plan your cleaning** to save energy. Do big cleaning jobs when you feel most energetic, such as in the morning.
- **Take your time** and split big tasks into smaller ones. Rest when you feel tired.
- For example, you could clean one part of your refrigerator on Monday and save another part for Wednesday.

Set Up Your Home



- **Reduce clutter** and clear out any narrow walkways in your home to prevent a fall hazard.
- **Reduce clutter,** especially in small areas to make it easier to move around your home and prevent falling.

(J Physical Therapy Science, 2019)

Laundry: Tips & Techniques

Set Up Your Home

Purpose: Laundry requires a lot of movement.
Tips: Set up your laundry area so that your supplies are within reach. Keep your laundry basket on a table to avoid bending down. Leave a chair where you typically fold clothing so you can sit. Consider having someone help with laundry until you feel comfortable.

Reduce Heavy Lifting

Purpose: Surgery can limit the weight that you can carry.
Tips: Divide laundry into smaller loads to eliminate lifting a heavy basket. Or, use a rolling laundry basket. If you have stairs, use a drawstring bag and take breaks as you go upstairs. Buy a smaller bottle of laundry detergent or use laundry pods to eliminate the need to lift heavy objects.

Tools to Help

Laundry Pods

Rolling Laundry Basket

Drawstring Laundry Bag

Sleep & Rest

Tips & Techniques, Optional Equipment & Tools, Additional Resources

Sleep & Rest: Tips & Techniques

Set Up a Relaxing Sleep Space

Purpose: Your bed, lighting, and temperature affect your quality of sleep.
Tips: Keep your space dark, quiet, and cool. Items such as blackout curtains, a noise machine, and a fan help to create a relaxing sleep space. On page 43, learn about progressive muscle relaxation for relaxation before bed.

Maintain a Regular Sleep Schedule

Purpose: Having a regular sleep schedule allows your body to begin to feel sleepy and more awake at the same time of day, every day.
Tips: Pick a consistent time to be in bed EVERY day. For example, try to be in bed and relaxing by 9 p.m. every day including weekends. (Again, 9 p.m. is an example. Choose a time that works for you.)

Sleep Restriction

Definition: Limiting the amount of time a person spends in bed, so the majority of time spent in bed is spent *sleeping*.
Purpose: Research states when practicing sleep restriction, a persons perception of sleep quality, fatigue, and sleep efficiency can improve.
Tips: If you get in bed at 9 p.m. and notice that you do not fall asleep until 11 p.m., try getting into bed closer to 11 p.m. Plan when you go to bed so you fall asleep easily (in 30 minutes).

Link: Sleep Foundation – Sleep Restriction Therapy

(Brian, L., & Cotliar, D., 2023; Polo et al., 2023)

Sleep & Rest: Optional Equipment & Tools

These items can help you have optimal sleep & rest.

Pillows

Do you sleep on your side? A knee cube helps maintain hip alignment.
Do you sleep on your back? A bolster pillow under your knee helps increase blood flow while you sleep.

Link: The BEST position to sleep is a position where your spine is aligned with your hips and neck.

Eye Mask

Does light bother you at night? An eye mask eliminates the potential of waking up in the night and helps to maintain a dark environment during sleep.

Noise Machine

Do you prefer subtle noise when you sleep? Neutral sounds help to eliminate disruptive noises while you sleep.

Nightlight

Do you get up and out of bed at night? A night light increases your ability to see and enhances safety by reducing fall risk.

(Jay & Rehman, 2023; Suni & Singh, 2023)

Sleep & Rest: Additional Resources

**Each box is linked to the Fred Hutch Cancer Center Website. Use these resources at your own pace and determine what works best for you.

1

Sleep Problems As a Side Effect of Cancer

Addresses how sleep problems are a common side effect of treatment and offers ways to help manage the effects at home.

2

Cancer Fatigue

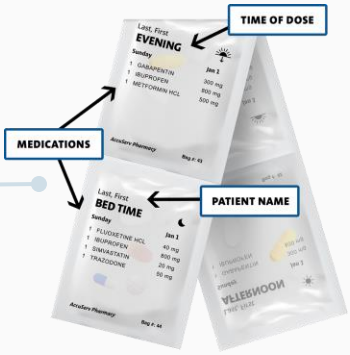
Addresses what cancer fatigue is and how it is different from "typical" fatigue. It also discusses the causes of it and how to manage symptoms.

(University of Washington, n.d.)

Managing Medications

Scheduling Techniques, Understanding Your Pill Bottle

Managing Medications: Scheduling Techniques



AccuPAC

AccuPAC is a pill pack service that pre-sorts medications by dose and delivers them to your door.

Link to AccuPAC Site

Automatic Refills

This allows prescriptions for certain medications to be refilled by the pharmacy without a patient request.

Home Delivery

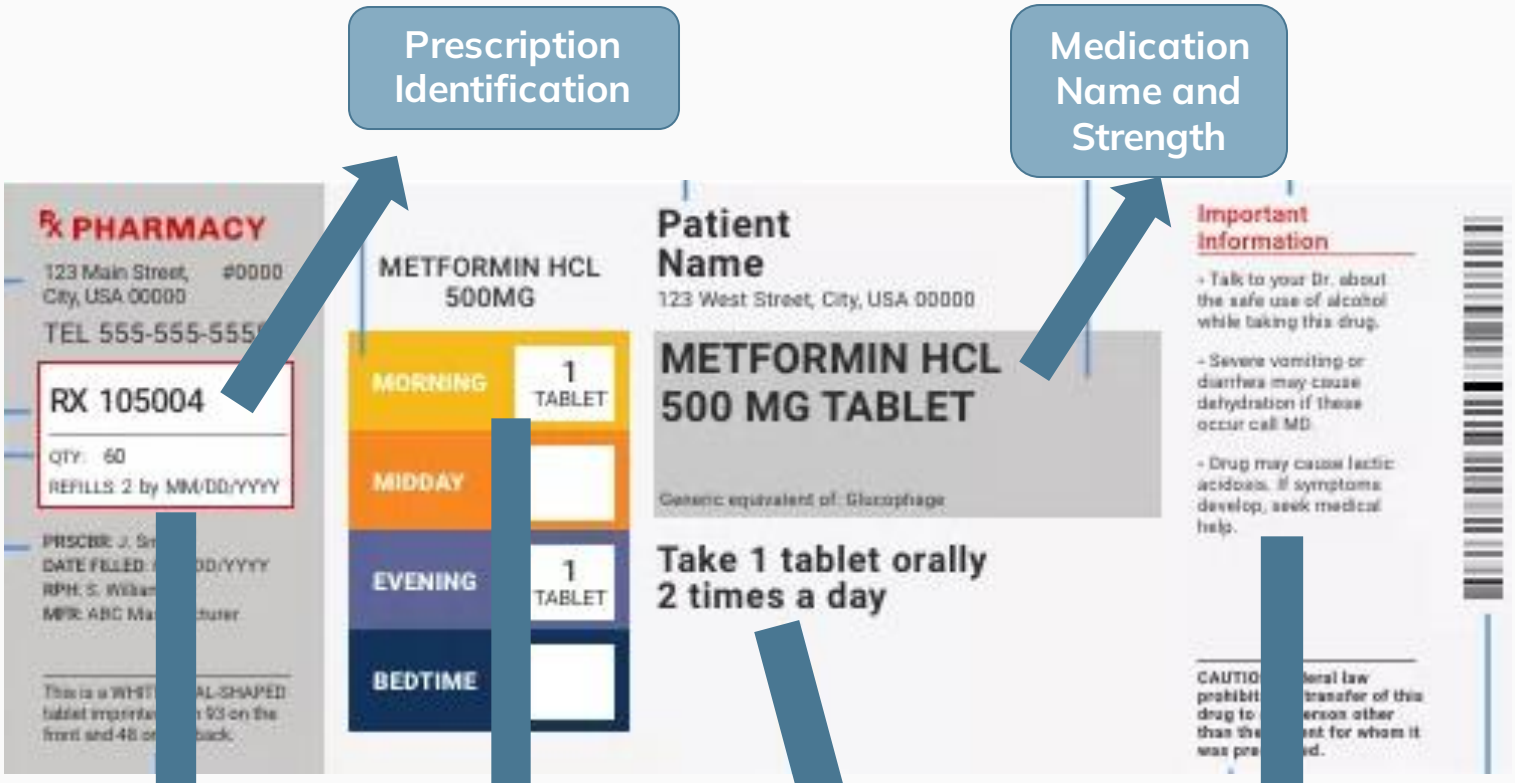
With delivery, you will no longer have to arrange transportation to the pharmacy. It helps with convenience and consistency.

Weekly Pill Box Organizer

A weekly pill box organizer can be used to sort medications by day and time.

(AccuPAC, 2023; Hall, 2021)

Understanding Your Pill Bottle

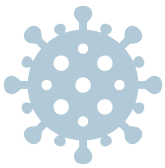
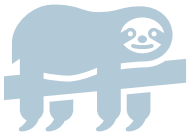


(Llamas, 2023)

Movement

Benefits of Movement, Communication & Considerations, Starting & Maintaining a Movement Routine, Additional Resources

Movement:
Benefits of Movement

Elevate Mood	Improve Sleep Quality	Increase Energy
Improve Quality of Life	Improve Heart & Lung Health	 Strengthen Immune System
Reduce Symptoms of Anxiety & Depression	Increase Appetite	Increase Physical Function
Prevent Muscle Loss	Maintain Healthy Body Weight	 Reduce Fatigue

(American Cancer Society, 2022; Cancer Research UK, 2023)

Movement: Communication & Considerations

Care Team Communication

- Talk to your care team before starting an exercise routine
- Especially if you have a heart or lung disease, ostomy, severe fatigue, balance problems, or bone metastases.

Medication Consultation

- Ask your doctor whether any of the medicine you are taking might affect how active you can be.

Movement During Treatment

- Certain factors can affect your ability to exercise, such as:
  - Type and stage of cancer
  - Specific cancer treatment
    - Prior level of strength and fitness before cancer treatment

Additional Support

- Ask your care team if they can refer you to exercise specialists, exercise physiologists, occupational therapists, or physical therapists. They can help you find the exercise that is right and safe for you.

Safety

- Exercise on an even floor. Exercise in bright areas. Consider group exercise for more support.
- If you are receiving radiation treatment, discuss what you can and cannot do with your care team.

(Cancer Research UK, 2023; Misiag et al., 2022)

Starting a Movement Routine

The American College of Sports Medicine & American Cancer Society weekly exercise GENERAL recommendation:

150 minutes of cardio

+

2-3 days of strength training

NOTE:
In the weeks after surgery, focus on *cardio*. Increase your cardio until you are doing 150 minutes per week. Then, add strength training when you are ready.

Maintaining a Movement Routine

Set Achievable Goals

- Create short and long-term goals.

Pace Yourself

- Focus on consistency, not volume.
- Start slow and schedule rest days between activities.

"Exercise Snacking"

- Space activities throughout the day
- *Ex. Split a 20-minute daily exercise goal into 5 or 10-minute intervals.*

Track Progress

- Use a fitness tracker, chart, or smart technology
- Maintain a walking log or activity schedule

Have Fun

- Find what motivates you.
- Try new activities.
- Exercise with friends.

(American Cancer Society, 2022; Rajarajeswaran & Vishnupriya, 2009)

Activity Tracker Template

My Movement Log			
Date:	Activity:	Time:	How I felt:

Movement: Additional Resources

Light to Advanced Intensity Exercises for Cancer Recovery *(25-35 minutes)*
General Exercises for Cancer Recovery *(30 minutes)*
Exploring New Exercises and Activities *(2 minutes each)*
#Dance4Wellbeing – Dancing Exercise *(4-6 minutes)*
Mobility Exercises After Breast Surgery: For Tightness & Pain *(12 minutes)*
Exercises after Breast Surgery: 0-3 weeks post-surgery & 3-6 weeks post-surgery
Head and Neck Cancer Exercises *(9 minutes)*
Exercise Routine after Hysterectomy *(6 minutes)*
Pilates after Hysterectomy *(20 minutes)*
Cardio & Strength Exercise Routine for Lymphatic Health *(15 minutes)*

Managing Pain

Tips & Techniques, Guided Mindfulness

Managing Pain: Tips & Techniques

Contrast Bath

Purpose: Helps with neuropathy by lowering arm and leg pain, edema, and joint stiffness. NOTE: do not use with open wounds or if you have a heart condition.
Link to Instructions: NHS Cambridge University Hospitals Contrast Bath Instructions

Pursed Lip Breathing

Purpose: For controlling your breathing pace to make each breath more purposeful and effective. This will help more oxygen to enter your lungs.
Directions: (1) *Breath in* slowly through your nose for 2 seconds as if you are smelling a flower. (2) *Breathe out* by pursing your lips as if you are blowing out a candle.
Link to more details on pursed lip breathing

Diaphragmatic Breathing

Purpose: Relaxation and breath control.
Directions: Place one hand on your chest and the other on your belly. Take a deep breath in through your nose – feel the hand on your stomach rise. Exhale through pursed lips.
Link to more details on diaphragmatic breathing

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Purpose: Relax and improve confidence.
Link to Directions: Progressive Muscle Relaxation PDF instructions

(Cleveland Clinic. n.d.; Government of Western Australia, 2019; National Health Service. n.d.; Noruzi et al., 2019)

Managing Pain: Guided Mindfulness

**Each box contains links to guided meditations. Use these resources at your own pace & determine what works best for you.

5 Minute Mindfulness Meditation

10 Minute Mindfulness Meditation

15 Minute Mindfulness Meditation

20 Minute Mindfulness Meditation

Fred Hutch Cancer Center: Mind - Body Relaxation

(Boho Beautiful Yoga, 2021; Great Meditation, 2021; MindfulPeace, 2021; The Mindful Movement, 2016; University of Washington, n.d.)

Managing Lymphedema

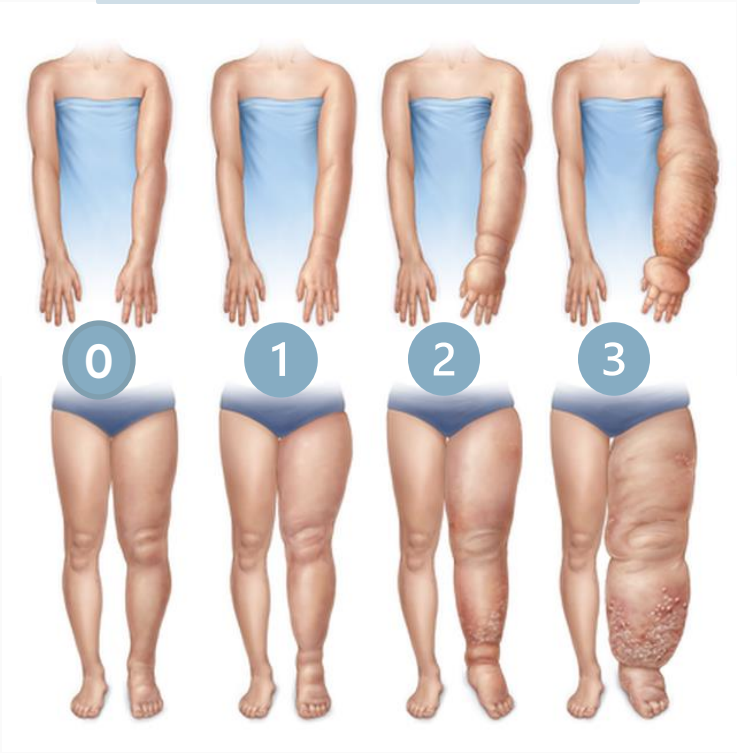
Definition, Stages of Lymphedema, Common Signs & Symptoms, Tips & Techniques

Lymphedema

Definition

- The build-up of lymph fluid in the tissues under your skin. This can cause swelling and discomfort.
- Lymphedema can happen when there is damage to the lymphatic system. This can be caused by cancer surgery or radiation therapy.

Stages 0–3



This portion of the guide is designed to educate about potential signs and symptoms of lymphedema. Although this information is useful for most, it is important to consult with your care team on what is best for your care.

(American Cancer Society, 2021; Mayo Clinic Staff, 2022; Sigvaris Group, n.d.)

Lymphedema: Common Signs & Symptoms

1. Swelling in part of the body (most commonly the arm or leg)
2. Restricted movement and/or flexibility in nearby joints
3. Hardening or thickening of the skin in the area
4. New aching, tingling, numbness, or discomfort in the area
5. Trouble fitting your arm into a jacket, trouble buttoning your pants, or rings/watches/bracelets feel tight

(American Cancer Society, 2021; Mayo Clinic Staff, 2022)

Lymphedema: Tips & Techniques

Exercises

- Lymphedema Exercise for Arms
- Lymphedema Exercise for Legs

Questions to Ask Your Team

- What is the first sign of infection? How can I avoid infection?
- Are there medicated powders I can use to get rid of bacterial or fungal growth?
- Are there compression bandages I can use to decrease swelling?

Resources in Pittsburgh

- The Advanced Wound Healing Center at Allegheny General Hospital
- UPMC Lymphedema Management

National Resources

- National Lymphedema Network

(LNNI, 2017; LNNI, 2011)

Coping with Your Emotions

When you return home after surgery, you might feel vulnerable or helpless. You may need help doing things you used to be able to do yourself. If your body has changed, it may affect your self-esteem.

It is completely normal to take time to get used to any changes in your body. Sometimes these changes can be hard to get used to, and it is okay to feel sad or angry about them. Your care team is ready to help you with those feelings and will not be surprised if you tell them that you feel this way. It is important to let them know if you are feeling this way.

If you or a loved one are experiencing a behavioral or mental health crisis, ***call 988 to connect with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline***. These services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. They are at no cost to the caller.

(American Cancer Society, n.d.; Cancer Council: Victoria, n.d.; Department of Human Services, n.d.)

Resources to Help You Cope with Your Emotions

1

Cancer Bridges – Supportive Counseling

Click the link above for more information about counseling services provided to members of Cancer Bridges. The clinicians specialize in cancer-focused short-term support for individuals, couples, families, and children.

2

National Cancer Institute: Coping with Cancer

Click the link above for information from the National Cancer Institute. It talks about how to cope with cancer and concerns that can occur.

3

Cancer Council: Emotions and Cancer

Click the link above for a Cancer Council guide on coping with cancer for people with cancer, their families, and their friends. This guide includes a coping toolbox and ways to get support.

4

UPMC: Living and Coping with Cancer

Click the link above for information sheets, videos, and other online resources given by UPMC. These resources can help you learn to live and cope with cancer.

Additional Resources

Related to Cancer & Cancer Surgery

Additional Resources

Related to Cancer & Cancer Surgery

1

Fred Hutchison Cancer Center

Click the link above for free patient education materials, videos, and online courses. These were created by experts at Fred Hutchison Cancer Center.

2

Cancer Council: Understanding Surgery

Click the link above for a guide by the Cancer Council. This can help people with cancer and their families better understand surgery. This guide includes information that is useful before, during, and after surgery.

3

American Cancer Society: Cancer Surgery

Click the link above from The American Cancer the American Cancer Society's general cancer surgery resources. They also have information on specific surgeries for your type of cancer.

Additional Resources

Related to Cancer & Cancer Surgery

4

National Cancer Institute

Click the link above to learn more about different types of cancer, research, events, and other cancer-related information from the National Cancer Institute.

5

Yale Medicine: Cancer Surgery

Click the link above from Yale Medicine to learn more about how surgery and other special treatments help treat cancer.

6

Cancer*Care:* Post-Treatment Survivorship

Click the link above to learn more about free support services from Cancer*Care* for people who have completed cancer treatment. You can also find information about life after treatment and other helpful resources.

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