

# Exercise can improve the health and wellbeing of cancer patients

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Exercise can improve the health of cancer patients who have completed their main cancer-related treatment finds a study published in the *British Medical Journal*.

Previous research found that cancer patients expect to resume daily activities having completed their main cancer-related treatment and yet often find that they suffer from increased fatigue, decreased physical activity and a reduction in quality of life.

But studies have found that many health factors, including quality of life, can be improved through partaking in physical activity.

Researchers from the University of Hong Kong analysed the results of 34 trials that assessed the effects of physical activity among adult cancer patients. Each study included an average of 93 patients who had suffered from either breast, prostate, gynaecologic, colorectal, gastric or lung cancer.

Aerobic, resistance and strength training were included in the trials and the median duration of physical activity was 13 weeks. The average age of patients was 55.

Patients who had undergone treatment for [breast cancer](#) and had taken part in a period of physical activity showed health improvements in: [blood sugar control](#), BMI and body weight, physical functions such as lower limb strength, [psychological outcomes](#) such as fatigue and

depression and quality of life. In patients having completed treatment for other types of cancer, improvements were seen in BMI, body weight, physical function such as [oxygen consumption](#) and handgrip strength, depression and quality of life.

Differences in the type and intensity of exercise also had an impact on the physical health of patients and played an important role in the effects of the exercise. [Breast cancer patients](#) found that [aerobic exercise](#) plus resistance was significantly more effective on physical fitness, emotional fitness, overall well-being and concerns about breast cancer compared to aerobic activity on its own.

The effect of physical activity was also greater on younger patients, although this part of the study was not entirely conclusive as younger patients were able to carry out physical activity for longer periods of time.

In conclusion, the paper's authors argue that further trials are needed, particularly on patients with cancer types other than of the breast and the intensity of activity also needed to be measured. They say their results conclude that "quality of life was a clear significant benefit of physical activity and that clinically, there were important positive effects on physical functions and quality of life".

Provided by British Medical Journal

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