

After prostate cancer, start walking: Walking routine improves health-related quality of life

16 April 2015

Walking at an easy pace for about three hours every week may be just enough physical activity to help prostate cancer survivors reduce damaging side effects of their treatment, according to a new Northwestern Medicine study.

"Non-vigorous [walking](#) for three hours per week seems to improve the fatigue, depression and body weight issues that affect many men post-treatment," said Siobhan Phillips, lead author of the study. "If you walk even more briskly, for only 90 minutes a week, you could also see similar benefits in these areas."

Phillips is a kinesiologist and an assistant professor in the department of preventive medicine at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. The paper will be published April 16, 2015 in the *Journal of Cancer Survivorship: Research and Practice*.

This is one of the first papers to investigate how different intensities and types of physical activity affect the health-related quality of life of men after [prostate cancer treatment](#).

"This study shows that you don't have to engage in high-impact, vigorous activities to improve your quality of life after a prostate cancer diagnosis," Phillips said. "Since many prostate cancer survivors might find vigorous activities hard to stick with, the good news is that simply focusing on walking more may be enough to make them feel better."

Phillips used data from the Health Professionals Follow-up Study, which includes self-reported data since 1986 on 51,529 men in health professions and is based at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. She focused on prostate cancer survivors who were diagnosed with non-advanced

disease prior to 2008 and responded to a health-related quality of life (HRQOL) questionnaire.

Common HRQOL symptoms included urinary and bowel problems, sexual function issues, fatigue, depression, increased body weight and erectile dysfunction.

The men reported the average time spent during a week walking to work or for exercise as well as time spent jogging, running, cycling, swimming and playing sports. They also reported their usual outdoor walking pace as easy, average, brisk or very brisk.

After controlling for pre-diagnosis [physical activity](#) and sedentary time, the findings indicate that higher duration of total, non-vigorous and walking activity—especially brisk walking—were associated with better hormone/vitality functioning (affecting fatigue, depression and body weight) but not with bowel, urinary, or sexual functioning.

Those who are able to walk should be encouraged to start an easy walking routine or engage in other non-[vigorous activities](#) soon after a [prostate cancer](#) diagnosis, Phillips said. The benefits could help manage symptoms such as fatigue, depression and [body weight](#) - and improve overall health.

"Cancer survivors have a higher risk of other conditions, such as cardiovascular disease," Phillips said. "Walking may also potentially increase survival and impact their quality of life by preventing the onset of those other conditions."

Provided by Northwestern University

APA citation: After prostate cancer, start walking: Walking routine improves health-related quality of life (2015, April 16) retrieved 6 September 2022 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2015-04-prostate-cancer-routine-health-related-quality.html>

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