

Bowel cancer



What is bowel cancer?

Bowel cancer (also known as Colorectal) is cancer developing in the inner lining of the large bowel, including the colon and rectum. With 1 in 11 males and 1 in 15 females at risk of being diagnosed with this cancer by the age of 85, it is the second most common cancer in both men and women in Australia. Upon diagnosis, a variety of surgical, chemotherapy and/or radiotherapy treatments are commonly utilised, each of which have significant side effects.

Significant research has shown that exercise is essential during and post any cancer treatment to assist in management of side effects and improving quality of life.

How does exercise help with bowel cancer?

Although limited research, the emerging evidence indicates significant improvements in preventing physical decline, assisting management of fatigue and promoting a better quality of life during treatment cycles. Post-treatment exercise has the ability to restore livelihood and complete regular daily activities.

Things to remember

- Any surgery or treatment have the ability to affect our bladder or bowel continence . If this affects you, let your exercise professional know to allow for toilet breaks.
- Patients receiving chemotherapy may experience fluctuating periods of sickness and fatigue during treatment cycles that require frequent modifications to exercise prescription, such as reducing intensity and/or duration of the exercise session.
- Short bouts of exercise may be more suited to begin with, this can be progressively increased as your fitness improves.
- Avoid pushing through any pain, especially in the abdominal region. It is important to start slowly when beginning an exercise program, and avoid pushing into stronger pain.

What type of exercise is best for bowel cancer?

Exercise Right recommends combining multiple forms of exercise for bowel cancer, including:

- **Strengthening and functional exercises** to help build maintain and restore muscles that are important for mobility and physical function, for example, squats, wall push ups or sit to stands.
- **Aerobic exercises** to help improve our ability to maintain movements without becoming out of breath and decrease side-effects of anti-cancer therapy. Walking, swimming or bike riding provide a form of aerobic exercise, the intensity should start of at a low-moderate level working up to high- intensity training as our aerobic capacity increases.
- **Stretching exercises** of all major muscle groups also addressing specific areas of joint of muscle restriction that may have resulted from treatment with steroids, radiation, or surgery.

Seek the advice of an accredited exercise physiologist before undertaking any exercise.

Always seek professional advice from an Accredited Exercise Physiologist. Find one here: www.essa.org.au/find-aep