

Prostate cancer



What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the most common form of all cancers among men, with 20,000 new cases in Australia diagnosed each, often referred to as the 'old man's disease' with the median age at diagnosis being 71. The most common site of metastasis is the bones, also known as your skeletal system. Risk Factors for Prostate Cancer may include age (>50yr), family history, poor diet and sedentary exercise levels.

Despite its prevalence in our society, prostate cancer is one of the most treatable forms of cancer with various forms of treatment available. Significant research has shown that exercise in conjunction with cancer specific treatments may slow the rate of progression and reduces recurrence of the cancer.

Common treatments for prostate cancer include:

- Radiation
- Chemotherapy
- Prostatectomy
- Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT- hormone treatment)

How does exercise help with prostate cancer?

Exercise plays a vital role in maintaining a person's health and wellbeing, and especially those men undergoing prostate cancer treatment such as Androgen Deprivation Therapy. Androgens are a class of male hormones that control the development and maintenance of male characteristics, such as testosterone. In the early stages, Androgens are necessary for the prostate cancer to grow and develop, which is why it's vitally important that early detection of the cancer is made.

Exercise also helps to manage the effects of Androgen Deprivation Therapy (ADT). ADT stops the production of male hormones and as a result, the male may experience the following side effects:

- Reduced bone mineral density
- Loss of muscle mass
- Increased fatigue
- Increase cholesterol levels
- Increased depression and cognitive function

What type of exercise is best for prostate cancer?

- **Aerobic and resistance-based (muscle strengthening) exercise** is safe and beneficial including walking, cycling, soccer training, jumping and high impact exercises, as well as a variety of resistance-based exercises. Individuals should be encouraged to participate in their preferred exercise unless directed by a health professional (e.g. if an individual has severe osteoporosis or if the cancer has spread to the bones, a modified program is best for reducing risk of fractures). Importantly though, an exercise program should not exclude exercises which load the skeleton as this strategy will exacerbate bone loss.
- **Moderate-intensity exercise** is recommended. The level of exercise required to make someone puff is influenced by fitness and the presence of cancer-related symptoms. When feeling unwell or unfit, slow walking may be enough to make someone puff (that is, be moderate-intensity exercise). However, as fitness improves or treatment-related side effects are less, a faster walking pace (or different exercise type) may be required to exercise at moderate-intensity. For those not already regularly exercising, it is recommended they start at low- to moderate-intensity and progress gradually. For those already regularly exercising, it is likely safe to exercise at high-intensity, but it is important to progress gradually up to this.

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