

Exercise (Physical Activity)

Women who get regular exercise (physical activity) have a lower risk of breast cancer than women who don't exercise.

Overall, women who get regular exercise have a 10%-20% lower risk of breast cancer risk than women who aren't active. This benefit is seen most clearly in postmenopausal women.

How much physical activity do you need?

The American Cancer Society recommends getting 150-300 minutes (2½-5 hours) of moderate physical activity a week, or 75-100 minutes (about 1-2 hours) of vigorous activity. This amount of activity is linked to a decreased risk of cancer overall. You don't have to do all the activity at one time. You can spread it out over the week.

Moderate activities include walking, mowing the lawn and slow dancing. Vigorous activities include jogging, playing tennis and swimming.

It's not just intense exercise that's related to a decreased risk of breast cancer. Women who get activity equal to taking a brisk walk 30 minutes a day have about a 3% lower risk of breast cancer than women who aren't active.

How exercise may be related to breast cancer risk

Exercise may be linked to a decreased breast cancer risk for a few reasons.

Exercise can help with weight control. Women who are lean have a lower risk of breast cancer after menopause compared to heavy women.

Being active may also lower blood estrogen levels. Women with lower blood estrogen levels have a lower risk of breast cancer than women with higher levels.

And, exercise may boost the body's immune system so it can help kill or slow the growth of cancer cells.

Tips to increase physical activity

Being active is good for your health, but it can be hard to find time to exercise.

Do any activity you enjoy that gets you moving (for example, dancing or gardening).

The tips below may help you become more active. If you can:

- Use stairs rather than an elevator.
- Walk or bike instead of driving.
- Park farther away from a store.
- Take your pet for a walk.
- Exercise at lunch or take a break to stretch.
- Take a quick walk.
- Plan active vacations.
- Wear a device every day to keep track of your steps.
- Join a recreational sports team.
- Use a stationary bicycle or treadmill while watching TV.

