

Cardiovascular fitness not affected by cancer treatment

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The cardiovascular fitness level of cancer survivors is not affected by many standard cancer therapies, say researchers from Georgetown University Medical Center. That is the finding of a new observational study to be presented today at the American College of Sports Medicine in Seattle.

"We know physical activity is a critical component of [cancer](#) survivorship, both during and after [cancer treatment](#)," says Jennifer LeMoine, PhD, a post-doctoral research fellow with training in exercise physiology at GUMC's Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center. "In order to prescribe an exercise program, it's critical that we understand our patient's fitness level and whether or not treatment has had an impact on their cardiovascular health."

For the study, the researchers conducted a chart review of 49 women who attended a physician-directed fitness clinic for cancer survivors, founded and run by Priscilla Furth, MD, the study's co-author. The data included demographics, physical activity levels and cancer treatment type, duration and time since their treatment. Fitness assessments were conducted using a three-minute step test during a clinic visit. The purpose of the study was to assess the step test as a way of determining a patient's current cardiovascular fitness level.

LeMoine says, "Often, what people think they are physically capable of doing and what they can actually do are two very different things. Many have a better fitness level than they expect while some find they're not as

fit as they thought. The step-test gives us a better idea of their exercise tolerance and cardiovascular-fitness."

All the patients in the study were women and were diverse by age and [body mass index](#). Their cancer diagnoses and treatments varied. Overall, 33 percent of the survivors were sedentary and 67 percent reported being physically active. Thirty-five (71 percent) of the participants completed the step test. Test completion and heart rate recovery were not affected by treatment, BMI, or age.

"What's really exciting to us was that we found that cardiovascular fitness was not affected by the expected culprits -- cancer treatment, type, duration or time since treatment," LeMoine explains. "That isn't to say there aren't side-effects of some treatments that may hinder physical activity, but when it comes to actual cardiovascular fitness as measured in our clinic, many of the standard treatments didn't have a role."

"We've modified an in-clinic cardiovascular assessment tool , the three-minute step test, with the goal of finding a test that can easily and quickly be performed in a physician's office," explains Priscilla A. Furth, MD, a professor of oncology and medicine at Lombardi. "Having this kind of evaluation tool is critical for physicians, like me, who are interested in prescribing [physical activity](#) for this population."

Source: Georgetown University Medical Center ([news](#) : [web](#))

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