

Exercise is good medicine for lymphoma patients

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A healthy dose of exercise is good medicine, even for lymphoma patients receiving chemotherapy, University of Alberta researchers have found.

The Healthy Exercise for [Lymphoma](#) Patients (HELP) trial, a three-year study led by Kerry Courneya, Canada Research Chair in physical activity and cancer in the Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, found that a regimen of aerobic [exercise training](#) produced significant improvements in physical functioning and overall quality of life benefits in patients with lymphoma.

Researchers recruited 122 patients with Hodgkin's and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, then stratified participants by disease type and treatment status; whether they were undergoing chemotherapy at the time or receiving no treatments. Participants were randomly assigned to an exercise program designed to maximize cardiovascular fitness or to usual care, which did not include an exercise component.

Exercisers trained three times a week for 12 weeks and were encouraged to stay the course with behavioural support techniques that included perks like free parking, a well-equipped gym, flexible exercise schedules, variation in exercises, follow-up phone calls reminders and positive reinforcement by staff.

Lymphoma patients who received the exercise intervention reported significantly improved physical functioning, overall quality of life, less

fatigue, increased happiness, less depression and an improvement in lean body mass. [Cardiovascular fitness](#) in the exercise group improved by over 20 per cent. The group receiving chemotherapy benefited as much as the group that was off treatments.

Perhaps most importantly, says Courneya, was that the vigorous intensity exercise program did not interfere with lymphoma patients' ability to complete their chemotherapy treatments or benefit from the treatments. He found that 46.4 per cent of patients in the exercise group had a complete response to their treatment (no evidence of disease) compared to only 30.8 per cent in the usual care group. Courneya cautions that the trial was not designed to look at this issue, but it at least suggests that lymphoma patients can achieve important health and quality of life benefits from exercise during treatment without worrying about compromising their treatment outcomes.

More information: The study, "Randomized Controlled Trial of the Effects of Aerobic [Exercise](#) on [Physical Functioning](#) and Quality of Life in Lymphoma Patients," was published in the Sept. 20, 2009, issue of the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*.

Source: University of Alberta ([news](#) : [web](#))

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