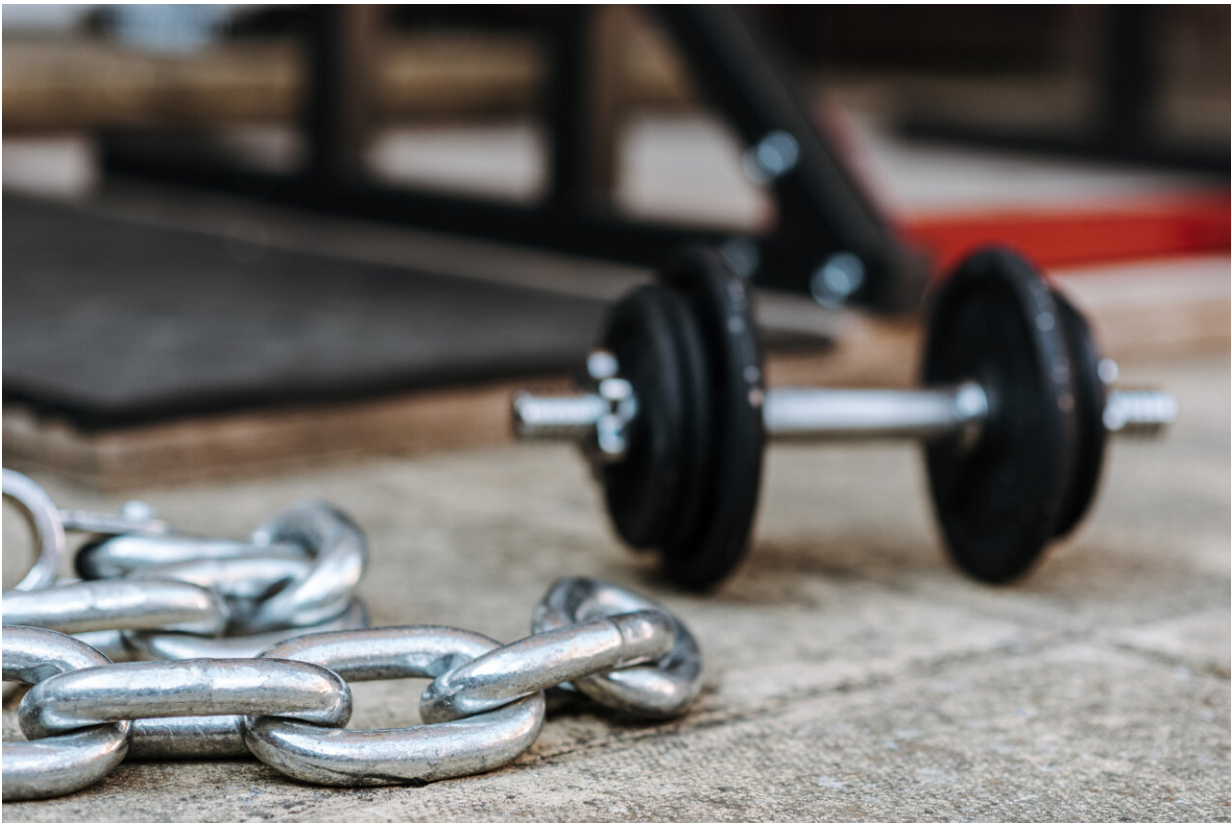


# Exercise–libido link confirmed in prostate survivors

October 23 2013, by Chris Thomas

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Credit: Anete Lusina from Pexels

In a world first, researchers from Edith Cowan University's Health and Wellness Institute have established a link between exercise and sexual health in men with prostate cancer.

Published this month in *Nature Reviews Urology*, the research by Doctor Prue Cormie and her team highlighted how exercise can counteract sexual dysfunction experienced by men undergoing [prostate cancer](#) treatment.

Up until now, it has been treated with implants, drugs and injections with the many causes, such as anxiety, body feminisation, depression and fatigue, not being addressed.

"Essentially, the exercise allows men to feel fitter and stronger, more masculine and less distressed and these improvements in physical and mental wellbeing are theorised to improve libido," Dr Cormie says.

Fifty-five men receiving treatment for prostate cancer were part of the [sexual health](#) study—half were placed on a three-month exercise program while the remainder received conventional treatment.

Those in the three-month program performed twice-weekly sessions involving moderate to high intensity resistance exercise, such as lifting weights, and aerobic exercise including walking, cycling and rowing.

Dr Cormie says the sessions were supervised by accredited exercise physiologists in groups of up to 10.

At the end of the program, 17 per cent of participants reported a high libido. No one in the control group did.

"A well-designed program incorporating resistance and [aerobic exercise](#) is required to maximise the potential sexual function and general health benefits," Dr Cormie says.

"Exercise is effective in counter-acting many adverse treatment-related side effects of prostate cancer including factors central to the causes of

sexual dysfunction.

"Appropriately designed exercise programs give significant improvements in body composition especially to counteract body feminisation, reductions in fatigue and decreased risk of common co-morbid conditions.

"These include a reduction in risk factors for cardiovascular disease, diabetes and obesity, declines in psychological distress and improved mental health, considerable improvement in fitness with enhanced muscular strength, aerobic capacity and physical function and increased levels of leisure-time physical activity, which all culminate in a significantly enhanced quality of life.

"Exercise also improves feelings of masculinity that can be compromised by the treatments associated with prostate cancer."

An expanded version of the trial, expected to take six months, is now underway with 160 men who have survived prostate cancer.

"We are expanding this research to investigate the reasons why [exercise](#) helps improve sexual health and explore the most effective strategies to minimise [sexual dysfunction](#) following prostate cancer," Dr Cormie says.

**More information:** [www.nature.com/nrurol/journal/.../nrurol.2013.206.html](http://www.nature.com/nrurol/journal/.../nrurol.2013.206.html)

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