

Exercise could work as treatment for prostate cancer

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Micrograph showing prostatic acinar adenocarcinoma (the most common form of prostate cancer) Credit: Wikipedia, [CC BY-SA 3.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/)

A newly-launched Cancer Research UK study could be the first step towards exercise training being introduced as a new NHS treatment for prostate cancer.

The PANTERA study, led by Sheffield Hallam University, will focus on 50 men who have the disease, but whose cancer has not spread. Half of

the men in the study will carry out two-and-a-half hours of aerobic exercise every week for 12 months - initially with the support of a qualified trainer and then with free access to local gyms. The other half will be given information about the benefits of exercise for cancer patients but will have no supervised sessions.

Prostate cancer that has not spread is sometimes treated with surgery or radiotherapy. But this can have side-effects so many men opt for active surveillance instead, which involves monitoring the disease. All the men in the PANTERA study are and will remain on active surveillance - and they will also be closely monitored as part of the study itself.

If the participants can successfully keep up their exercise regime for 12 months, the study is expected to lead to a full-scale trial to look at the potential benefits of combining active surveillance and exercise for some [prostate cancer](#) patients.

This trial - believed to be the first of its kind in the world - would aim to test whether [regular exercise](#) can help keep prostate cancer from spreading to other parts of the body and could be a viable NHS treatment.

Study leader Dr Liam Bourke, principal research fellow at Sheffield Hallam University, said: "Evidence suggests that men who are physically active after a prostate cancer diagnosis have better cancer survival than men who aren't active. It's not clear yet how this works, but it might be that exercise affects the way some genes regulate cancer cell growth and DNA repair.

"The clinical academic team in Sheffield have been working hard for eight years to develop the intervention that is being tested in this exciting study. It builds on what we already know and is the first step towards finding out whether exercise could be an effective and practical NHS

treatment for localised prostate cancer. If we show it works and is feasible, it could be a real leap forward and good news for cancer patients."

David Curtis (68) from Sheffield was diagnosed with early prostate cancer in March 2014 and has been exercising as part of the PANTERA study for several weeks - and continuing to exercise is one of his New Year resolutions. He said: "I was never someone to go to the gym, even though I've always been active, but now I go to the gym twice a week and do lots of walking. Since starting on the study, I've started to lose weight and my PSA level has come down which is a really positive indicator.

"I feel privileged to be on the study and pleased to be part of any research which might be useful to others."

PSA is produced by both normal and cancerous prostate cells, and a high PSA level in the blood can be a sign of cancer. Study researchers will check what effect regular exercise has on the body, including on PSA levels, and will also gather information about how well the study runs, to prepare for a full-scale trial.

In the UK, prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men with around 43,400 new cases diagnosed each year and around 10,800 deaths. Many types of prostate cancer grow extremely slowly and are not likely to spread, while others are more aggressive.

Professor Malcolm Mason, Cancer Research UK's prostate cancer expert, said: "Taking exercise is good for all of us, whether or not we have cancer - but this interesting study could help discover whether it's particularly helpful and a viable, additional treatment for some prostate cancer patients. Focusing on patients whose disease is under [active surveillance](#), rather than being treated in other ways, provides a fantastic

opportunity to monitor the effects of [exercise](#) on prostate cancer - and could even shed light on its potential as a supplemental therapy for other types of cancer."

Anyone interested in taking part in the study or finding out more about it, should visit cancerresearchuk.org/pantera.

Provided by Cancer Research UK

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