

Quality of life for patients with advanced cancer improved through walking

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Walking for just 30 minutes three times per week could improve the quality of life for those with advanced cancer, a new study published in the BMJ Open journal has found.

Researchers from the University of Surrey collaborated with those from the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery at King's College London to explore the impact of walking on the quality of life and symptom severity in patients with [advanced cancer](#).

Despite growing evidence of significant health benefits of exercise to cancer patients, [physical activity](#) commonly declines considerably during treatment and remains low afterwards. Initiatives in place to promote physical activity for those suffering with cancer are normally supervised and require travel to specialist facilities, placing an additional burden on patients.

During this study 42 [cancer patients](#) were split into two groups. Group one received coaching from an initiative by Macmillan Cancer which included a short motivational interview, the recommendation to walk for at least 30 minutes on alternate days and attend a volunteer-led group walk weekly. The health benefits of walking are well documented, with improved cardio vascular strength and increased energy levels. Group two were encouraged to maintain their current level of activity.

Researchers found that those in group one reported an improvement in physical, emotional and psychological wellbeing having completed the

programme. Many participants noted that walking provided an improved positive attitude towards their illness and spoke of the social benefits of participating in group walks.

One of the participants commented: "The impact has been immense! It gave me the motivation to not only increase walking activity from minutes to 3-4 hours per week but also to reduce weight by altering diet, reducing sweets/sugars. Great boost to morale. No longer dwell on being terminal - I'm just on getting on with making life as enjoyable as possible, greatly helped by friends made on regular 'walks for life'."

Professor Emma Ream, co-author of the paper and Professor of Supportive Cancer Care and Director of Research in the School of Health Sciences at the University of Surrey, said: "The importance of exercise in preventing cancer recurrence and managing other chronic illnesses is becoming clear.

"Findings from this important study show that exercise is valued by, suitable for, and beneficial to people with advanced cancer.

"Rather than shying away from exercise people with advanced disease should be encouraged to be more active and incorporate exercise into their daily lives where possible."

Dr Jo Armes, lead researcher and Senior Lecturer at the Florence Nightingale Faculty of Nursing & Midwifery, King's College London, said:

"This study is a first step towards exploring how walking can help people living with advanced cancer. Walking is a free and accessible form of physical activity, and patients reported that it made a real difference to their quality of life.

"Further research is needed with a larger number of people to provide definitive evidence that [walking](#) improves both health outcomes and social and emotional wellbeing in this group of people."

More information: Vicki Tsianakas et al. CanWalk: a feasibility study with embedded randomised controlled trial pilot of a walking intervention for people with recurrent or metastatic cancer, *BMJ Open* (2017). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2016-013719](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2016-013719)

Provided by University of Surrey

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