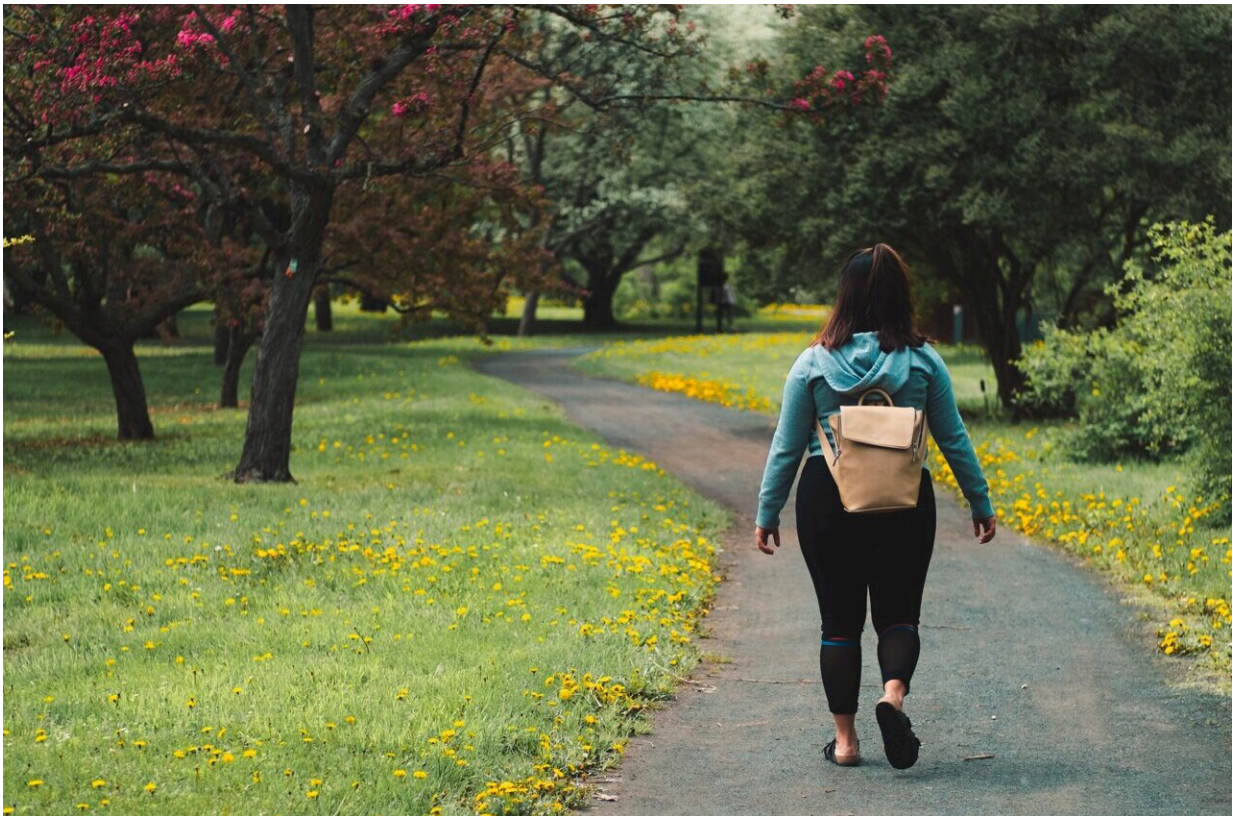


# Precision physical activity prescriptions improve survival in colon cancer

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Credit: Unsplash/CC0 Public Domain

Physical activity may be associated with improved outcomes for patients undergoing postoperative treatment for Stage III colon cancer.

A new study from Pennington Biomedical Research Center, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology*, assessed 1,696 patients who had undergone surgery and chemotherapy to treat Stage III colon cancer. The study examined how different types and intensity of [physical activity](#) might impact the length of time patients remained alive and disease-free. Specifically, researchers assessed the overall amount of physical activity the patients engaged in, as well as the type of activity. The researchers compared light and moderate physical activity, vigorous aerobic activity, brisk walking, and muscle-strengthening [exercise](#).

Although many patients with colon cancer initially beat the disease, up to one-third experience cancer relapse which is often incurable. Prior to this study, it was unknown how different types and intensity of physical activity impacted [disease recurrence](#) and death in colon cancer survivors. Current clinical guidelines encourage patients to simply avoid inactivity.

"Colon cancer survivors are generally told it is best to avoid inactivity. However, many patients want specific guidance on the types of activity that can maximize their probability for cure. This study provides oncologists and their patients with specific information on exactly what type of activity will be most helpful in their goal of remaining alive and cancer-free," said Pennington Biomedical Cancer Metabolism Program Director Justin Brown, Ph.D., who led the study. "What we found is that larger volumes of recreational physical activity, longer durations of light-to moderate-intensity aerobic physical activity, or any vigorous-intensity aerobic physical activity were associated with the highest chances of remaining alive and cancer-free. Patients should first identify a physical activity that they enjoy and then refer to the study results to determine how much of that activity is needed to achieve such a [health benefit](#). If you enjoy the activity, you are more likely to stick with it over time."

The study took place within an existing National Cancer Institute (NCI) trial that compared certain pharmaceutical treatments in patients who

had undergone surgery to treat their [colon cancer](#). The patients were followed for nearly six years.

"We were fortunate to be able to conduct this study as an offshoot of the NCI study. By conducting this study within the NCI trial, we eliminated many of the common limitations of prior studies to allow us to zero in on what will benefit the patient and what might not," Brown said.

"We know that healthy lifelong habits can make a difference in cancer survivors' overall wellness. This cutting-edge research project provides patients with very specific recommendations on how they can take back some level of control against a disease that often feels overwhelming," said Pennington Biomedical Executive Director John Kirwan, Ph.D.

The journal article contains detailed charts outlining the benefits associated with the different types of physical activity and the amount per week that is ideal for achieving disease-free survival.

**More information:** Justin C. Brown et al, Physical Activity in Stage III Colon Cancer: CALGB/SWOG 80702 (Alliance), *Journal of Clinical Oncology* (2022). [DOI: 10.1200/jco.22.00171](https://doi.org/10.1200/jco.22.00171)

Provided by Pennington Biomedical Research Center

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