

# Female cancer survivors experience accelerated declines in physical function

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Female survivors of cancer experience accelerated declines in physical

function after diagnosis versus matched controls, according to a study published online Jan. 19 in *JAMA Oncology*.

Elizabeth M. Cespedes Feliciano, Sc.D., from Kaiser Permanente Northern California in Oakland, and colleagues examined trajectories of physical function a decade before and after [cancer diagnosis](#) among 9,203 older survivors and 45,358 cancer-free, matched controls.

The researchers found that before diagnosis, physical function declines of survivors with local cancers were similar to those of controls, while after diagnosis, survivors experienced accelerated declines versus controls. In the year following diagnosis, short-term declines were most severe in women with regional disease (e.g.,  $-5.3$  points per year in regional versus  $-2.8$  for local breast cancer) and for those who received systemic therapy (e.g., for local endometrial cancer,  $-7.9$  points per year with any chemotherapy;  $-3.1$  with [radiation therapy](#) alone;  $-2.6$  with neither). In the later postdiagnosis period, rates of physical function decline slowed (e.g., women with regional colorectal cancer declined  $-4.3$  points per year in the year following diagnosis versus  $-1.4$  [points](#) per year in the decade thereafter). However, five years after [diagnosis](#), survivors had physical function significantly below that of age-matched controls.

"Patients with cancer may benefit from supportive interventions to preserve physical functioning," the authors write.

**More information:** Elizabeth M. Cespedes Feliciano et al, Long-term Trajectories of Physical Function Decline in Women With and Without Cancer, *JAMA Oncology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1001/jamaoncol.2022.6881](https://doi.org/10.1001/jamaoncol.2022.6881)

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