

Even small amounts of physical activity could be valuable in late-stage lung cancer

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Lung cancer kills more people globally each year than any other type of cancer, however new Curtin University-led research has found less than five minutes of daily physical activity could be linked with prolonged

life in people living with inoperable forms of the disease.

The team from Curtin School of Allied Health, Curtin enAble Institute and other research organizations measured the [daily activity](#) of 89 people living with inoperable lung cancer, from the time of their diagnosis.

"Association between Physical Activity and Reduced Mortality in Inoperable Lung Cancer" was published in the [Journal of Clinical Medicine](#).

They then compared the [mortality rates](#) after 12 months between those who engaged in more moderate-to-vigorous [physical activity](#) (such as walking) and those who were largely inactive—and saw significant results.

The people who completed more than 4.6 minutes per day of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity had a 60% lower risk of mortality after 12 months compared to the group who were less active.

Study lead and former Cancer Council WA postdoctoral Fellow Associate Professor Vin Cavalheri said this could be important in treating people with inoperable lung cancer, particularly early.

"We previously demonstrated people with inoperable lung cancer were highly sedentary and spent minimal time in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity before the commencement of treatment," he said.

"These new findings further indicate that health care providers should investigate a person's levels of physical activity in early management of inoperable lung cancer.

"We also need to evaluate what can be done to encourage people with inoperable lung cancer to exercise more, as 24% of the study's participants engaged in less than one minute per day of moderate to

vigorous physical activity."

Associate Professor Cavalheri said it was important to tailor any physical activity or exercise regimes to each individual, rather than focus on a set of guidelines which some people may find unattainable.

"This approach respects the inherent complexity of the individual's experience and encourages the development of strategies that are both feasible and sustainable, thereby increasing the likelihood of the successful adoption of physical activity as an integral component of their lives," he said.

"We need a supportive framework that enables people who are newly diagnosed with inoperable lung cancer to participate in physical activity based on their unique circumstances and goals."

While bedrest is often seen as the best option when sick, Associate Professor Cavalheri said the new study was part of growing evidence being active is beneficial even when dealing with serious diseases such as cancer.

"The association between higher physical activity levels and reduced mortality corroborates the findings from previous studies in the general adult population and people diagnosed with [colorectal cancer](#), [breast cancer](#), [prostate cancer](#) and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease," he said.

"If this association is confirmed, randomized controlled trials in people with inoperable [lung cancer](#) are warranted, with interventions designed to improve levels of physical activity."

More information: Vinicius Cavalheri et al, Association between Physical Activity and Reduced Mortality in Inoperable Lung Cancer,

Journal of Clinical Medicine (2023). [DOI: 10.3390/jcm12237346](https://doi.org/10.3390/jcm12237346)

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