

Could regular exercise help women battling advanced breast cancer?

11 January 2017, by Rob Kidd



QUT researchers are looking for women with breast cancer to take part in an exercise study. Credit: Queensland University of Technology

QUT researchers are looking for Brisbane women who have been diagnosed with stage 2 (or above) breast cancer to take part in a study into the safety, feasibility and benefits of a regular exercise program.

Participants will receive home visits from [exercise](#) physiologists who will create a 12-week tailored exercise program for them and offer ongoing support.

Lead researcher Professor Sandi Hayes from QUT's Faculty of Health said women who were currently undergoing treatment were encouraged to take part, as were those who have had treatment in the past five years.

"Please don't assume anyone is 'too unwell' to take part," she said.

"Our experienced exercise physiologists are

specifically trained to help people with medical conditions exercise despite complex barriers."

Professor Hayes said researchers already knew that exercise during treatment or following early stage breast cancer diagnosis was associated with improved quality of life. It's also looking promising that exercise will influence survival post-breast cancer.

"This new study is looking at the 50 per cent of women who are diagnosed with stage 2+ breast cancer and who currently do less than 150 minutes of exercise a week," Professor Hayes said.

She said 10 women had already completed the program and experienced benefits.

"We've noticed improvements in overall fitness, muscle strength, muscle mass and quality of life," she said.

The research team is looking for another 60 women to join the study, who are aged 18 years and older and live within 60km of the Brisbane CBD.

PhD researcher Ben Singh is one of the exercise physiologists visiting participants in their homes.

"The women who've taken part have really enjoyed it and have been surprised about how capable they are of doing regular exercise and how much benefit they are getting from participating," he said.

"We've had a few women with metastatic [breast cancer](#) take part who are having on-going treatment. Despite the [treatment](#) side effects they are experiencing, they too have also been able to safely participate and experience significant physical and emotional benefits.

"We do make sure we individualise the program. They don't have to join a gym ... instead we focus on regular walking and doing home-based

resistance exercises with hand weights and resistance bands."

The SAFE study is part of QUT's Improving Health Outcomes for People (IHOP) program, which is run by the university's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation and Faculty of Health.

If it finds that exercise is safe and beneficial for the target group, a larger study will be offered to more [women](#).

More information: Women interested in taking part in the current QUT study can email safe@qut.edu.au or phone 07 3138 3016.

Provided by Queensland University of Technology

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