



BC Cancer Agency

CARE + RESEARCH

An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Healthy lifestyle



What makes a healthy lifestyle?

- Exercise
- Nutrition
- Laughter
- Handling Fatigue
- Hope
- Spirituality
- Forgiveness
- Self Trust

...and so on

Exercise

Lifestyle means exercise!

Everyone needs to get active. In fact, many of the changes that occur in our bodies as we get older may not be due to aging but to a lack of physical activity.

A more active lifestyle has been proven to reduce the risk of many diseases as well as reduce the symptoms of chronic conditions.

In short, the proven benefits of exercise are many and the side-effects are few. The exercise connection can be taken one step further: people who are in good shape tend to develop other positive lifestyle habits, like a healthy diet, not smoking and moderate use of alcohol.

There is no definitive information on just how hard or how long one has to exercise but daily physical activity is important. A good general guideline to aim for is to exercise at least 3 times a week for 20 to 45 minutes at an activity you like: walking, swimming, cycling, dancing. Graduated weight training has been proven to be beneficial to people of all ages... check it out with your doctor.

Practice:

List the activities you enjoy:

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

My notes:

Nutrition

Eating well:

A nutritious diet is always vital for your body to work at its best. Good nutrition is even more important for people with cancer. Why?

- People who eat well during their treatment are better able to cope with the side effects of treatment. People who eat well may even be able to handle a higher dose of certain treatments.
- A healthy diet can help keep up your strength, prevent your body tissues from breaking down, and rebuild tissues that cancer treatment may harm.
- When you eat enough food, particularly the right kind of food, your body has nutrients as a source of energy. As a result, your natural defences are strong and your body can fight infection effectively. Your immune/defence system is especially important to you now.

What kinds of food do I need?

A good rule to follow is to eat a variety of different foods every day. No one food or group of foods contains all of the nutrients you need. A diet to keep your body strong will include daily servings from these food groups:

Fruits and Vegetables: Raw or cooked vegetables, fruits, and fruit juices provide certain vitamins (such as A and C) and minerals the body needs.

Protein Foods: Protein helps your body heal itself and fight infection. Meat, fish, poultry, eggs, and cheese give you protein as well as many vitamins and minerals. Plant proteins such as beans and nuts are another important source.

Grains: Grains, such as bread, pasta and cereals, provide a variety of carbohydrates and B vitamins. Carbohydrates provide a good source of energy, which the body needs to function well.

Dairy Foods: Milk and other dairy products provide protein and many vitamins and are the best sources of calcium.

NOTE:

Eating well does not mean becoming overweight! In fact, some studies have found that gaining too much weight was harmful to the treatments and the person's future well-being.

So... how's your diet ?

Practice:

Daily, I eat —

Fruits and Vegetables:

5-10 servings per day

Protein:

2-3 servings per day

Grains:

5-12 servings per day

Dairy Foods:

3-4 servings per day

And drink several glasses of water

The hospital dietitian is available to help you, ask your nurse or doctor for a referral.

Laughter

Humour promotes:

- Simplicity.
- Change in how we see things.
- Delight.
- Optimism and Hope.

The benefits of humour:

1. Aids circulation of blood.
2. Decreases blood pressure.
3. Lowers heart rate.
4. Increases respiration and cleans foreign matter out of the respiratory tract.
5. Increases the level of endorphins (the body's natural pain killers).
6. Stimulates the endocrine system (hormone production).
7. Stimulates the immune system (disease prevention).
8. Reduces stress.
9. Relieves muscle tension.

Laughter is internal jogging !

We have to learn not to take ourselves too seriously.

PRACTICE !

Some thoughts to make you smile:

Save time — see it my way.

Go with the flow...and don't forget to play and engage in life.

Warning: Humour may be hazardous to your illness.

Never underestimate the unimportance of everything.

Dogs have owners, cats have staff.

We don't laugh because we are happy ... we're happy because we laugh.

To avoid pollution, a person shouldn't blow his stack.

Laughter is the shortest distance between 2 people.

Give yourself the courage to be imperfect.

Humour prevents a "hardening of the attitudes" — helps you to stay flexible.

Even though we have pains, we don't have to be one.

Handling Fatigue

In addition to exercise, setting aside time for simple restorative activities three times a week for about 30 minutes may be helpful in dealing with feelings of fatigue. These simple restorative activities include:

1. Walking or sitting in a natural environment such as a park.
2. Tending to plants.
3. Gardening.
4. Bird Watching.
5. Reading.
6. Doing crossword puzzles.
7. Watching a movie.
8. Listening to music.
9. Taking a bath.
10. Others _____.

Practice:

Schedule into your weekly agenda one of the above activities. Just as we make appointments with the doctor, we need to make time for non-medical healthy activities. Learn your own rhythm and energy cycles and stop activities before deep fatigue sets in. It's easier to recover that way.

Some find it energizing and helpful to keep a journal or diary where they write their thoughts, feelings and observations about life.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness has 2 benefits:

- it reduces stress – anger, fear, bitterness
- it increases social support

“If you devote your life to seeking revenge, first dig 2 graves.”

— Confucius

Hope

Hope is not a way out — it is a way through.

Hope is much more than a desire to get well. Hope must include effort, hard work, and determination to reach that goal of wellness. Hope looks to the future but rests in the present. It guides your present experience and reflects your love of life.

Hope has proven to be a powerful ally in the struggle to find balance in life. You are not a statistic; as some patients have said, “if 20 % of the people with this type of cancer are cured, I want to be part of that 20 %.”

“Cancer patients recovering from surgery, chemotherapy and radiation know that daily survival and well-being requires the presence of hope. Hope differs from survival. Hope is the stuff on which productive energy is built.” Elizabeth Simpson, cancer survivor, The Globe and Mail, Spring 1996

“There is no cancer for which there is no treatment; and there is no cancer from which some people have not been cured.” Richard Block (H&R Block) cancer survivor

Learn to believe in miracles. Then picture yourself as part of one.

“We have hardly begun to learn. We have not come to the end of knowledge by a long shot; we have only come to the edge of it.” Johnson and Klein, Staying Healthy with Cancer, 1988.

It’s an uplifting thought. The decades ahead hold great promise. No one can predict what is around the corner for the individual diagnosed with cancer today. There is certainly reason for hope.

*Hope is always deep within us — even though
the nature of what we hope for changes,
the hope itself remains.*

Spirituality

For many people spirituality and prayer have always been a part of their lives. For others, they have not been important. The relationship between spirituality and health is being explored by a number of universities and research centers. It turns out that there are more than 100 scientific studies in the general area of spirituality and prayer. A good summary of the evidence is common sense: use what works. In medical situations there will be a place for both prayer and modern medicine.

“In its simplest form, prayer is an attitude of the heart — a matter of being. Prayer is the desire to contact the Absolute, however it may be conceived. When we experience the need to make this connection, we are praying, whatever the words, and even whether or not we use the words. Prayer is not better than modern medicine. Prayer, medications and surgery — they are all a blessing, a grace, a gift. Why not use all of them, with reverence and gratitude?” asks Larry Dossey, MD., author of *Prayer is Good Medicine*.

The body does not distinguish between prayer, meditation and relaxation techniques. They all come from the heart and have many similarities. Although our minds may distinguish between them, our bodies do not.

You may ask if you should pray? As Dr. Dossey responds, “If you need to ask, you’ve probably already begun.”

Prayer or spiritual belief is like running to your mother when you fell and scraped your knee as a child. You didn’t think she would take away the scrape and pain but that you would be comforted and strengthened.

Self Trust

Self trust is a strong inner core that says we know we can handle whatever life throws at us.

It's being authentic and arises from the use of the FACT-THOUGHT-FEELING way.

It's very much like love and self-respect, from our wisdom and intuition.

*When you are stressed,
put your hand over your heart or touch your cheek
as you might touch the cheek of a child you love,
and say simply, "**I understand.**"*

Self trust leads to self-management

Here are 5 core self-management skills:

1. Problem-solving
2. Decision-making
3. Using resources
4. Forming partnerships with the health care system
5. Taking action—small steps immediately.