
Healthy Living, Healthy Mind- Being Active

Hormone therapy is the most effective way to reduce the chance of the breast cancer coming back. Being active and having a healthy diet can help too! Why not try to **combine hormone therapy with a healthy lifestyle** to reduce your risk of breast cancer coming back.

In this section you can find suggestions, hints and tips for making changes to your lifestyle or looking after your physical and mental health. These are based on research and conversations with women taking hormone therapy. They may also help with some of the side-effects of hormone therapy that you might experience.

Why should I combine hormone therapy with a healthy lifestyle?

Some people don't like the idea of taking medicines. They may have heard that other methods can be used to manage cancer risk, like special diets, herbal or other alternative treatments, or simply maintaining a healthy lifestyle and positive attitude. It's true that anything you do to maintain a healthy lifestyle - like healthy eating and staying active - can only help. However, in terms of reducing the risk of breast cancer coming back the evidence is strongest for hormone therapy, and it is best if you are able to combine taking HT with a healthy lifestyle. Research shows that hormone therapy works and combining it with a healthy lifestyle is the best way to reduce your risk of breast cancer coming back.

This section includes information on the following topics:

- What are the benefits of being more active?
- Q&A about being active after breast cancer
- Staying safe whilst being active
- How you can be more active
- Goal setting for being active
- Further information

Being active

People differ in how active they are. Some women may have been active before cancer and not now. Some may have continued to be active after the cancer treatment. There are also women who are not active at all.

The good news is that **no matter how active you were before having cancer or how active you are now - you can benefit from being more active every day!**

This section will support you in becoming more active in your day to day life.

What are the benefits of being more active?

Did you know that you can gain some great health benefits when you increase the time you are active?

Being active might help to prevent the breast cancer from coming back

Research shows that women with breast cancer who are active every day have less chance of the cancer coming back than women who are not active.

Adding more active time to your week, for example, going for a walk every day, doing some sports like swimming or cycling - can give you some protection from cancer.

Physical activity can have this positive effect on your health because it can influence various biological mechanisms in your body.

For example, being active improves how some hormones are produced and working in your body, and can help to protect your body cells and tissues from damage.

Being active can help to reduce some of the side-effects of hormone therapy

Many women experience side-effects of hormone therapy, for example, fatigue, joint aches and/or hot flushes. The good news is that if you suffer from any of these side-effects being active can help you feel better.

Being active for 20 minutes every day can make a real difference in how you feel.

Becky, who has breast cancer, found that being active really helped with joint pain:

'In terms of being active, I do suffer with moderate bone and joint pain as a result, I think, of taking Tamoxifen. In some ways, it had more of an initial impact on my mental rather than physical health as I came to almost resent the fact I was uncomfortable and that my mobility was affected (it wasn't badly affected but it was enough for me to notice and to make me think twice about doing certain things). But then I found that the thing that helped most was exercise. It felt counter intuitive to start with - when it hurts to get up, sitting on the sofa all day seems like the most sensible idea! - but I found that a bit of regular, gentle exercise really helped. I'm not

really a big fan of exercise and wasn't a regular gym goer before treatment but I've started swimming a couple of times a week and it's really helped so I've tried to be more active throughout the subsequent years of taking the drug.'

Becky, Breast Cancer Patient, Age 56

If you are not very active at the moment, you can start with going for a 15-20 mins walk every day. This will help you to get going. Once you get used to these walks, you may add some more intensive activities to your day.

To reduce fatigue and boost energy – you could try a spin class or dancing twice a week.

To reduce joint aches and pains – you could try an aqua class or swimming twice a week.

To reduce how often you experience hot flushes and how intensive they are – you could try brisk walking or running twice a week.

Any activity that you can add to your everyday life can help you to feel better.

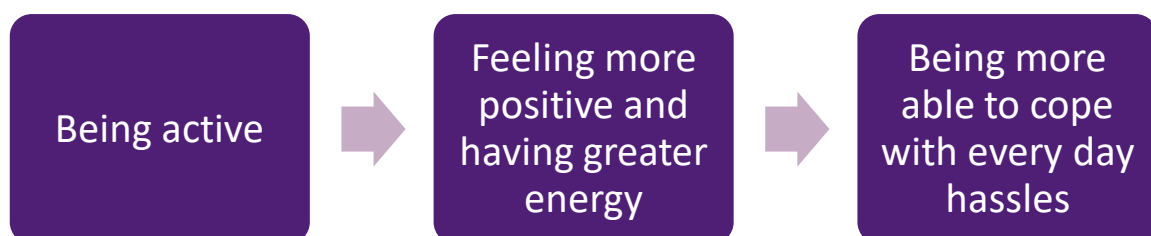
Choose an activity that suits you best and try it for yourself!

Being active can help to improve your mood

Women with breast cancer may experience difficult feelings like sadness, anger or anxiety. **But the good news is that some light intensity activities like walking, housework, or gardening can help to improve mood.**

When you are active your body releases endorphins – hormones that make you feel happier. This can help you feel more positive and less stressed. Feeling more positive can help you cope better in your everyday life.

Being active can be a positive thing that you do for yourself. It can give you a sense of control over your health and wellbeing.



Being active can help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight

Women who are taking hormone therapy sometimes feel they have put on weight. However, it is important to try to keep to a healthy weight when you have had breast cancer.

Being active can help you to lose some weight or maintain a healthy weight.

For example, you could **do some housework (like Hoovering), play with your children or grandchildren, work in the garden, do some DIY, or go for a walk. It all adds up!**

Being active can help to keep your body strong

Aromatase inhibitor therapy (e.g. anastrozole, letrozole, exemestane) can cause bone thinning (osteoporosis). Being active every day can help with that. For example, **walking, dancing, or doing squats and lunges can help to keep your bones strong.**

Being active every day can help you to build your muscle strength and improve your fitness, which can make everyday tasks easier. For example, you may be better able to carry shopping, get out of bed or walk up and down stairs.

Being active can help to improve your memory

Research shows that **being active can help to keep your memory sharp.** When you're active, your heart rate increases, which increases blood flow to the brain. **Being active can help keep your body and your mind healthy.**

Questions about being active

Many women who have had breast often have concerns about becoming more active. See the sections below to find answers to some of the questions women who have had breast cancer had before they became more active:

I've had breast cancer, is it safe for me to be active?

Some women become less active after they've had breast cancer. Treatment for breast cancer can be exhausting and they may not feel like being active. They worry

that doing some physical activity might make them feel worse, for example, feeling more tired or feeling hotter.

But studies show that being active is safe for women who have had breast cancer. And what's important is that it has lots of benefits!

If you're unsure whether the activity or a new exercise programme is ok for you, speak to your GP or cancer team about it.

I haven't been active for quite a while now, how do I get active again?

The best way to become active is to **slowly increase the time you are active each day.**

Being more active around the house can be a great way to start being active. For example, **each day add some more activity into your day - do a bit more housework than you usually do or walk for 10-15 mins longer than you normally do.** You could also try to sit less.

By slowly increasing the time you're active, your body will adapt to the new routine.

I'm often very tired - will being more active will make me feel even more tired?

Many people have found that doing some **gentle activities is a great way to make them feel less tired.**

Going for a walk outside or moving around the house can actually make you feel more energized!

This is because being active can make you breathe a bit more. As you breathe in the air, the oxygen levels in your blood go up and more oxygen is circulated to the brain. The more oxygen gets to your brain the more power it has and the less tired you may feel.

Why not try to go for a walk (even in your garden or just along the street!) and get some fresh air every morning or at lunch time?

"I have found that regular exercise (walking at least 5 days a week) has helped combat any bone and joint pains as I feel none, and has given me energy (no fatigue) and in turn has helped my mental well-being"

Mary, Breast Cancer Patient, age 65

I'm in pain doing normal activities, can I be more active?

Some women wonder how they could be physically active if it hurts doing everyday activities. You may not feel like going for a brisk walk or getting back to running if it hurts just getting up after sitting for a while.

Very often you may feel pain in your body because your bones and your joints are stiff as they've not moved for a while. Going for a walk or for an aqua class doesn't make that pain any worse.

"Well, if it hurts to get out of bed in the morning, how can I go for a run?' So, the reassurance that actually, I can't describe it, but it's almost like a different pain, like the pain when you get up out of the sofa because you've been sitting for two hours, you don't have that when you're out walking or running. I think, once I realised that, I was more comfortable to be more active."

Fran, Breast Cancer Patient, Age 58

"My fitness had gone, I was completely out of breath after a short run, but it didn't make that pain that I had when I got out of the sofa any worse, at all."

Sarah, Breast Cancer Patient, Age 37

Slowly increasing the time when you are active can help you feel less pain in your joints and muscles. This is because moving around more prevents your joints from getting stiff.

What do I do if I have pain during or after exercise?

At first, you may feel some pain during or after doing some activities. But this is fine, it means that your body is working. It may take 6 to 8 weeks for your muscles and joints to get used to your new activity level. But sticking to being active can help you feel less pain in the long-term.

Here are some tips to help you manage pain during and after physical activity:

- Start slowly and gradually build up how much you do.
- Try a different type of exercise that puts less pressure on the joints—for example, switch from walking to water aerobics.
- Do proper warm-up and cool-down before and after exercise.
- Be active at a slow pace – see if you can carry on a conversation while exercising.
- Make sure you have good fitting, comfortable shoes.

- If you take a class (e.g., yoga, Pilates) – ask your instructor which positions to avoid if you have some pain while exercising.

You can find more information about being active with joint aches and pains by typing the weblinks into your browser:

- Physical activity for Arthritis (joint pain): <https://www.cdc.gov/arthritis/basics/physical-activity-overview.html>
- Exercises for healthy joints: <https://www.versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/exercising-with-arthritis/exercises-for-healthy-joints/>

I don't have time to be active

Some women who have had breast cancer are put off being active because they think it will mean that they have to spend a lot of time in the gym.

However, you don't need a lot of time to be active. **You can be active anytime and anywhere.**

Research has shown that just 10 minutes activity each day is enough to improve your health.

You can **start by adding more activity to something you already do, like walking around the kitchen while you're on the phone or walking to a nearby shop to do light grocery shopping.**

Staying safe while being active

To stay safe while being active out and about:

- wear loose-fitting clothes so you can move easily
- wear comfy shoes with a good grip
- drink water
- let someone know where you are going and how long you expect to be out

When being active it is important to listen to your body, stop being active if you experience any of the following:

- feeling dizzy
- chest pain
- a very rapid or irregular heartbeat

- breathing problems
- feeling sick
- unusual back or bone pain
- unusual muscle pain
- a headache that does not go away.

Speak to your doctor if you notice any of these, or any other symptoms.

How can I get active?

You can gain the greatest health benefits when you're active for about 20 mins a day. Brisk walking, swimming or even walking up the stairs count!

You don't need to take up new sports or do something new. **The trick is to find things that you enjoy, are comfortable doing and fit easily into daily life.**

Whatever you can manage and however much you do already, being more active will improve your health and wellbeing. **Every bit of activity helps!**

Tip: Energy levels can differ during the day. Try to be active when you have most energy.

Get more active at home

There are many ways in which you can be more active at home.

Why not:

- do hoovering or tidying
- do gardening
- go up and down the stairs a few times
- dance to your favourite song
- play with your children or grandchildren

Walk more

Walking is the easiest way to get active. You can do it anytime and anywhere.

It can be a great way to start being active because it doesn't need to be hard or tiring and you don't need any special kit. You can easily fit it into your day.

Why not:

- walk the dog
- put some music on and walk briskly around the house
- walk around the kitchen while cooking
- walk around the room during commercials while you watch TV
- park a bit further away from where you need to go
- walk part of your journey to work.

“Exercise has a very positive impact on mental health as well as physical health. I walked 2-3 miles a day all the way through treatment and continue to do so. Chemo permanently damaged the soles of my feet so that made it difficult for a time but now I’m used to it I can manage 10 mile hikes. The positive impact on your state of mind is immeasurable and it keeps all your joints moving. Exercise doesn’t have to be running or weights or even strenuous, it just has to be to keep the body moving. It has such a positive impact on the whole body (digestion, immune system) not only the joints”

Pam, Breast Cancer Patient, Age 57

Build strength and improve balance

Having strong muscles and good balance can make things such as carrying the shopping bags or gardening easier and safer. It can also help to **prevent bone thinning and prevent falls as we get older.**

Here are some simple exercises to build your muscle strength and improve your balance.

Exercises to build muscle strength

- Stand from a sitting position try not to use your hands. Repeat up to 12 times.
- Do squats. Repeat up to 12 times.
- Walk up and down the stairs. Repeat up to 12 times.

You can find some other strength exercises by typing this link into your browser:
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/strength-exercises/>

You can also try 10-minute home toning workout. To take a look, type this link into your browser: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>

Exercises to improve balance

- Stand on one leg while waiting for the kettle to boil. Switch to the other leg next time you have a cuppa. Start with a chair next to you or wall for support. Once your balance gets better, you may stop using support. Try to hold the balance for 10 seconds. Once you find this easy, you may increase the time you hold the balance.
- Walk along a straight line. Repeat up to 12 times.

You can find some other exercises to improve balance on the NHS website. To take a look, type this weblink into your browser: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/balance-exercises/>

Get active with friends and family

Ask a friend or a family member to join you when you are active. Lots of activities can be done with others. **It is fun to do some activities with the people you like spending time with.** For example, you could go for a walk, cycle or sign up for an aqua class together,

Making plans to be active with other people can help you stick to it. Getting other people involved can also help you **stay on track** - you can **celebrate your success together** and there will be always someone to **talk to if you're struggling** with some activities.

Sign up for a class or try a new sport

Signing up for an exercise class or trying a new sport can be a great way to add more activity to your day. This will also mean that you'll be active on a regular basis.

Joining a group can also give you a chance to socialize with other people – being active in the company of others can be fun!

You can have a think about getting back into something you used to enjoy. Or perhaps you are fancy trying new sports or classes?

Why not try:

- swimming or aqua aerobic classes
- dancing
- stretching and strength building exercises like yoga, Tai Chi or Pilates
- bowling
- cycling
- running.

"Keeping physically fit has been extremely important - regular walking and swimming, and the 5k park run, has helped a lot with managing both weight gain and mental health. I also found that after surviving surgery and chemo, I was a lot less fearful generally, more willing to take a risk and have learned to horse-ride, something I'd always been too nervous to do"

Sarah, Breast Cancer Patient, Age 56

There are lots of resources online that can help you become more active. To find contact details for individual sports governing bodies, such as British Cycling or the Amateur Swimming Association, and where to find facilities near you, type this weblink into your browser: <https://www.sportengland.org/>

Goal setting for being active

How goal setting can help you to be more active

Setting a goal is a great way to either start being more active, or to help you keep going. Here you can set some activity goals.

Think about the activities you already do. There is probably an easy way to do a bit more of these. Why not set a goal to do more? Or think about new activities you would like to try, then set a goal to try these. You can do this on the next page.

By fitting these activities into your current lifestyle, you'll start getting more active without even thinking about it!

You might wonder whether goal setting will really work. **Yes – research shows that setting short-term achievable goals is a great way to help you get more active.**

One study followed people who set goals, and those who did not, over 6 weeks. The results showed that **people who set goals were more likely to get active and spent more time walking.** Setting an activity goal **helped them to focus on what they wanted to achieve and how exactly they wanted to do it.** So goal setting helped them get moving!

Set a new goal

You can set a new goal in the HT&Me website by going to **My Goals and Plans** and receive personalised feedback on your goal.

Or, you can set one here.

First, choose an activity from the list below, or write your own:

- Walking
- Housework
- Gardening
- Strength exercises
- Balance exercises
- Swimming
- Cycling
- Pilates
- Yoga
- Tai chi
- Dancing
- Bowling
- Running

Now, think about how many days are you going to plan to do this activity?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Now, try writing this out in the boxes below:

My activity:	
How many days:	

You can come back in one week and review this goal – for example, have you managed to achieve your goal? Or do you need to revise your goal?

It may be a good idea to stick up a reminder of your goal somewhere in your house.

Find out more

Here are some useful links to other websites where you can find lots of ideas on how to be more active. To take a look, type the following weblinks into your browser:

- To check gentle exercises that can help you get started after breast cancer: <https://breastcancernow.org/about-us/news-personal-stories/eight-exercise-videos-help-you-get-started-after-breast-cancer>
- To check Ramblers (a walking community): <https://beta.ramblers.org.uk/>
- To check some other strength exercises on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/strength-exercises/>
- To try a 10-minute home toning workout: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>
- To check some other balance exercises on the NHS website: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/strength-and-flexibility-exercises/balance-exercises/>
- To try the NHS Couch to 5k programme NHS Couch to 5K programme to guide you how to become more fit through starting to run: <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/running-and-aerobic-exercises/get-running-with-couch-to-5k/>