

Your guide to eating well and exercising



Looking after your body when you have ALK+ NSCLC is important. Getting yourself as healthy as possible will help to prepare you for what lies ahead with treatment, and will support your body.

This guide will provide you with some tips on how to eat well and stay fit while on treatment.

Diet and nutrition

Making sure that you are eating healthy, balanced meals and getting as much good nutrition as possible is really important. To help with this, your healthcare team may put you in touch with a dietician (or nutritionist) who can help you plan healthy meals that work for you.¹

However, some people find cooking difficult when they have cancer, for example if they are experiencing side effects. If you are struggling like this, then why not try some of the ideas below:

- Have a friend or family member help you with cooking or food shopping¹
- Prepare meals in advance in batches, so that you can reheat them throughout your week¹
- Look into “meals on wheels” schemes, where a service will deliver specially-prepared meals to your door for you¹

Some people also find that they can lose their appetite. This could be down to changes in how things taste, to nausea, or to just not feeling hungry.² In these cases, try:

- Eating smaller portions of food more often than you normally would^{1,2}
- Carrying snacks with you so that you have something to eat if you get some appetite back during the day¹
- Making meals a happy and relaxing time – play music, have a conversation, or if you are on your own watch a television show you enjoy¹

Exercise and activity

To some people, the idea of exercising after a diagnosis of cancer sounds like the opposite of what you should be doing, but research has shown that it actually has a number of positive effects.

A moderate level of exercise has been shown to improve symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety and depression, and can also help improve breathing, muscle strength and osteoporosis (thinning of the bones).³ Even light exercise such as walking, stretching or yoga can help people feel better.^{3,4}

You should always listen to your body when exercising and not over-exert yourself. Exercise

should be tailored to you and your needs.⁵ If you are having difficulty exercising, then talk to your healthcare team about it. They can offer you further support and may be able to refer to you occupational therapists, trainers or physiotherapists.⁶

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Exercising for the first time after a diagnosis

As long as your doctor confirms that it is safe for you to do so, you can start exercising. You should ask them for advice on what type of exercises are best given what stage you're at with your cancer and its treatment, and if there's anything in particular you should avoid. If this is the first time you have exercised in a while, then start slowly and build up strength and stamina at a rate which works for you and your body.⁷

Pain during exercise

At times, cancer may cause pain in your body. You should tell your healthcare team about this, and ask for their advice and support about how to manage any pain. They may even be able to provide advice about how certain types of exercise could help reduce pain in some instances.⁸

Finding ways to exercise with limited mobility or access to fitness equipment

You can exercise almost anywhere, including at home or out and about in your neighbourhood or a local park, and exercise needn't be too strenuous. Why not try some of the following activities:

- Light stretching to keep your body mobile, or yoga or Pilates if you feel up to something a little more intense⁹
- Gentle walking around where you live,⁹ perhaps to the local shops or with a dog if you have one
- Basic strength training exercises (such as abdominal crunches, squats or push-ups)¹⁰ – there are many ways to adapt these exercises if you have limited mobility, and you can use free weights or resistance bands to increase the difficulty as you gain strength¹¹

REMEMBER:

- Consult your healthcare team before embarking on any new exercise or activity programme to make sure it's suitable for you⁹
- If you have been told that you have low immunity (meaning your immune system isn't working as well as it normally would) then a public gym or swimming pool may not be the best place for you to exercise as it's easy to pick up a cold or other illness^{7,9}

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