



## The Cancer Recovery Pyramid: Exercise Resource #1

# The Importance of Exercise

US Department of Health and Human Services 2008 **Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (PAGA)** provide recommended types and amounts of physical activity.

The American College of Sports Medicine’s Guidelines for Exercise Testing and Prescription address safety issues for medical conditions other than cancer, as well as general principles for exercise prescription.

**PAGA** notes that all individuals should strive to avoid inactivity and that any level of physical activity may provide health benefits. The recommendation applies to cancer survivors, with an emphasis on returning to normal daily activities as quickly as possible after surgery and continuing activity as much as possible during treatments.

For adults to gain substantial health benefits, **PAGA** suggests at least 150 min/week of moderate-intensity activity or 75 min/week of vigorous-intensity activity (or an equivalent combination). **PAGA** applies the same prescription to older adults, with the addition that those whose physical conditions preclude participation in 150 min/week of moderate-intensity activity, such as cancer survivors, should be as active as they are able.

For resistance/weight training, **PAGA** recommends moderate- or high-intensity activities for all major muscle groups at least twice a week. To improve flexibility, **PAGA** recommends that adults stretch major muscle groups and tendons on days they participate in other types of activity. **PAGA** also notes that older adults benefit from balance exercises.

### Summary of exercise guidelines for cancer patients and survivors:

	AEROBIC	RESISTANCE	FLEXIBILITY
Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans (PAGA) <sup>b</sup>	150 min/week of moderate-intensity or 75 min/week of vigorous-intensity activity, or an equivalent combination.	Muscle-strengthening activities of at least moderate intensity at least 2 days/week for each major muscle group.	Stretch major muscle groups and tendons on days other activities are performed.
Breast	Follow US PAGA	Start with supervised program and progress slowly.	Follow US PAGA
Prostate	Follow US PAGA	Follow US PAGA	Follow US PAGA
Colon	Follow US PAGA	Follow US PAGA except with stoma, where lower resistance and slower progression are recommended to avoid herniation.	Follow US PAGA taking care to avoid excess abdominal pressure if patient has ostomy.
Gynecologic	Morbidly obese women may require additional supervision.	Data on safety and benefits are not available for women with lower limb lymphedema.	Follow US PAGA
Hematologic, no HSCT	Follow US PAGA	Follow US PAGA	Follow US PAGA
Hematologic with HSCT	Recommend starting with lighter intensity and slower progression to greater intensity and duration.	Follow US PAGA. Resistance training may have particular benefits in this population.	Follow US PAGA

<sup>a</sup> Adapted from Schmitz et al 2010.

<sup>b</sup> U.S. HHS Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee.

<sup>c</sup> Used with permission.