

Disease-Free Survival: How Does Exercising Impact Colon Cancer?

A study found that physical activity prolonged disease-free survival for people with Stage III colon cancer.

November 10, 2023 By [Colon Cancer Foundation](#)

We all know that exercise is healthy. However, the extent to which a patient with colon cancer could improve their prognosis through exercising is something that was previously unknown, and is still being researched. Authors of one such research study [published their findings](#) after analyzing how physical activity impacted individuals with Stage III colon cancer.

Does Exercise Improve Colon Cancer Outcomes?

In collaboration with the National Cancer Institute, two groups of patients with Stage III colon cancer (one of them being a placebo or control group) were randomly assigned to various community and academic centers throughout the U.S. and Canada to be evaluated during the duration of their treatment. Patients were then instructed to report the average weekly time that they spent exercising.

Each physical activity was assigned a specific metabolic equivalent (MET). The MET values were then multiplied by the hours that each patient reported spending each week, which were then categorized as:

- <6 METs (light- to moderate-intensity physical activities)
- ≥6 METs (vigorous-intensity activities)

Patients' METs were evaluated throughout their chemotherapy treatments as well as six months after treatment completion.

Here's What They Found

During a median follow-up of 5.9 years, the study found the following relation between the status of a patient's health and their corresponding physical activity levels:

- For light-intensity to moderate-intensity activities, the 3-year disease-free survival (DFS) was 65.7% with 0.0 hour/wk
- For vigorous-intensity activity, the 3-year DFS was 76.0% with 0.0 h/wk and 86.0% with ≥ 1.0 h/wk

These results strongly indicate that more frequent, high-intensity recreational activities can improve DFS.

Implications for Patients

Nothing is ever directly causational, and there are never guarantees that one specific lifestyle change will influence treatment outcome. However, studies like this are vital because they provide information that could change one's quality of life while going through cancer treatment. If a patient with colorectal cancer picks up running as a new hobby because of this study and it makes them feel better in their day-to-day life, then that is a real-world influence of research studies.

This blog was published by the [Colon Cancer Foundation](#) on October 24, 2023. It is republished with permission.