

CANCER RECOVERY ARC™

Resistance Training Tips Following Breast Cancer

What is Resistance Training?

Resistance training is commonly known as strength training and may include the use of one's own body weight (i.e. squat) or free weights, weight machines, resistance bands, kettle balls, weighted bars, etc.

What are the benefits of a resistance training program?

↑ Muscle Strength and Stamina

↓ Fatigue

↑ Bone Density

↓ Risk of Falls

↑ Ease in Daily Living Activities

How should you begin?

Following the clearance from your oncologist and surgeon you can safely begin a resistance training program. There is not a "one size fits all program", you are therefore encouraged to seek the guidance of a physical therapist or cancer exercise specialist to assist you in developing a safe and appropriate plan for your current state of health and fitness.

Here are some basic guidelines.

Warm-up your muscles for at least 5 minutes prior to any resistance training. This may include a brief session of aerobic exercise, range of motion exercises for all major muscle groups and stretching. Be sure to include active deep breathing to encourage lymphatic flow.

Progress slowly. There is wisdom in the slow and steady approach to upper body resistance training.

- Begin with your own body weight or a 1lb. weight for all upper body exercises. Yep, 1lb!
- Begin with 8-10 repetitions of each exercise, alternating between upper and lower body.
- Begin with 1 set of exercises involving all major muscle groups.
- Increase repetitions from 8-10, to 10-12 and then 12-15.
- Progress to 2 sets and again repeat the gradual increase in repetition of exercises.
- Progress to 3 sets following the same guidelines.
- Increase weight *only* after you have completed 3 sets, 12-15 repetitions, 2 times per week without any change in your arm (swelling, pain, stiffness).

Cool down your muscles by stretching all major muscle groups and complete your session with concentrated deep breathing exercises.

What can you do to keep yourself safe?

Get clearance to participate from your doctor and surgeon.

Seek out a trained professional who understands your cancer diagnoses and treatment.

Wear a compression garment on your arm if you have had surgery, axillary node dissection or radiation.

Do not engage in resistance training unless you are in a stable state, free of lymphedema.

Seek professional guidance if you should experience any swelling or pain.

Take your time and rebuild your strength in a safe and mindful manner. Remember you are seeking life-long health. Life is a marathon, not a sprint. You've got this!!