




BLADDER
CANCER
CANADA




CANCER
DE LA VESSIE
CANADA



Healthy LIVING

GUIDEBOOK



For people living
with or beyond
a bladder cancer
diagnosis

What's in this GUIDEBOOK

INTRODUCTION - LIVING A HEALTHY LIFE	4
• It's Good to Be in the Blue Zone	5
YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT	6
• Healthy Eating for People Living with or Beyond a Bladder Cancer Diagnosis	7
• The Effect of Foods on Bladder Cancer	8
• Sample Recipes	9
• What Can I Eat to Offset Some of the Side Effects of Bladder Cancer Treatments?	10
• Avoid Bad Nutrition Habits	11
SMOKING AND DRINKING	12
• Smoking is the Number 1 Risk Factor	12
• What About Alcohol?	13
GET MOVING FOR BETTER HEALTH	14
• How Much Exercise is Enough?	15
• How Do I Measure How Hard I'm Working?	16
• Can I Exercise if I Have Bladder Cancer?	16
• Exercise Considerations	17
• Exercise Program	19
• When Not to Exercise	23
GETTING ENOUGH ZZZs	24
• Tips for Getting a Good Night's Sleep	25
THE IMPORTANCE OF STRESS RELIEF	26
• Relaxation Tips and Techniques	27
STRONG RELATIONSHIPS FOR GOOD MENTAL HEALTH	28
• Maintaining or Creating Strong Relationships	29
AVOID NEWS OVERDOSE	30
DON'T FALL INTO THE INTERNET "RABBIT HOLE"	31
• How to Avoid Misinformation	31
• Tips That Can Help You Find Reliable Information Online	32
ABOUT BLADDER CANCER CANADA	33
• Get Involved	34
INFORMATION SOURCES	35

This guidebook is the culmination of the efforts of a dedicated team of volunteers who have experienced bladder cancer firsthand, along with medical students and professionals who generously shared their expertise.

A special acknowledgment goes to **Stephen Wilson**, a volunteer with Bladder Cancer Canada for over ten years, whose vision and commitment were instrumental in creating this guide and the six previously released patient guidebooks.

Stephen suddenly passed away during the creation of this guidebook, but we find solace in knowing that his invaluable contributions will continue to impact patients and their families. His legacy continues through the education and support these guidebooks provide to those affected by bladder cancer.

This guidebook is dedicated to Stephen and all those who have contributed to this important work.



LIVING A Healthy LIFE

Whether you're living with or beyond bladder cancer, recovering from illness, supporting someone who has been ill, or you just want to live a healthier life, we hope you'll find this guidebook useful.

There is ample research that indicates living a healthy lifestyle can play an important role in the prevention, treatment and recovery from diseases such as bladder cancer. This guidebook will explore healthy living principles and offer you practical tips on how to achieve and maintain good health.

So, let's get started! 

IT'S *good* TO BE IN THE BLUE ZONE

We don't mean that it's good to be sad! We're talking about the concept of the "Blue Zones," five places in the world where people are generally healthier and live longer.

These include regions in Japan, Italy, Costa Rica, Greece, and even California. Researchers have been studying the Blue Zones for years and have pinpointed lifestyle choices that are common to people who live in the Blue Zones. These include:

- ♥ **Making movement a natural part of your day**
- ♥ **Knowing your sense of purpose**
- ♥ **Prioritizing stress relief**
- ♥ **Eating a largely plant-based diet and eating until you're about 80% full**
- ♥ **Drinking alcohol in moderation**
- ♥ **Connecting with family and having close, supportive social relationships**

This guidebook will explore these healthy living principles and offer you practical tips on how to achieve these goals. We'll also include some additional principles as we go along.

In some cases, people diagnosed with bladder cancer need more specific information – such as dietary recommendations while undergoing chemotherapy, avoiding foods that may irritate the bladder, or doing exercises that support recovery from surgery. We've highlighted those special considerations throughout this guidebook.



You are WHAT YOU EAT



You've probably heard of the SAD – the Standard American Diet. It applies equally to us here in Canada too. Many (perhaps most) of us eat a lot of processed foods, foods high in saturated fat, excess salt, and way too much sugar. Why? Because these foods are convenient, accessible, and they taste good – really good.

Research has shown that many health issues, such as cancer, diabetes, and stroke, are linked, at least in part, to what we eat. So, let's explore some strategies to eat our way to better health. The eating principles listed to the right are not only important for people living with bladder cancer, but every one of us:

FOLLOW A HEART-HEALTHY DIET



Eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, whole grains, skinless poultry and fish, low-fat dairy products, nuts and legumes, and non-tropical oils such as canola, olive, peanut, sunflower, and vegetable oil.

EAT FOODS WITH PLENTY OF FIBRE



Some examples are whole-grain products, fruits, vegetables, beans, legumes, and nuts. This can help ease some of the symptoms associated with bladder cancer treatment.

STAY HYDRATED



General guidelines recommend 6-8 250 mL (8 fl oz) glasses of water a day. However, each person needs a different amount of water depending on factors like health, exercise, and climate, so talk to your doctor about how much water you should be drinking every day. Clear urine is a good indicator of hydration. If you are having trouble drinking plain water, you can stay hydrated with water flavourings such as lemon or lime slices, or unsweetened herbal teas.

EAT PLENTY OF LEAN PROTEIN

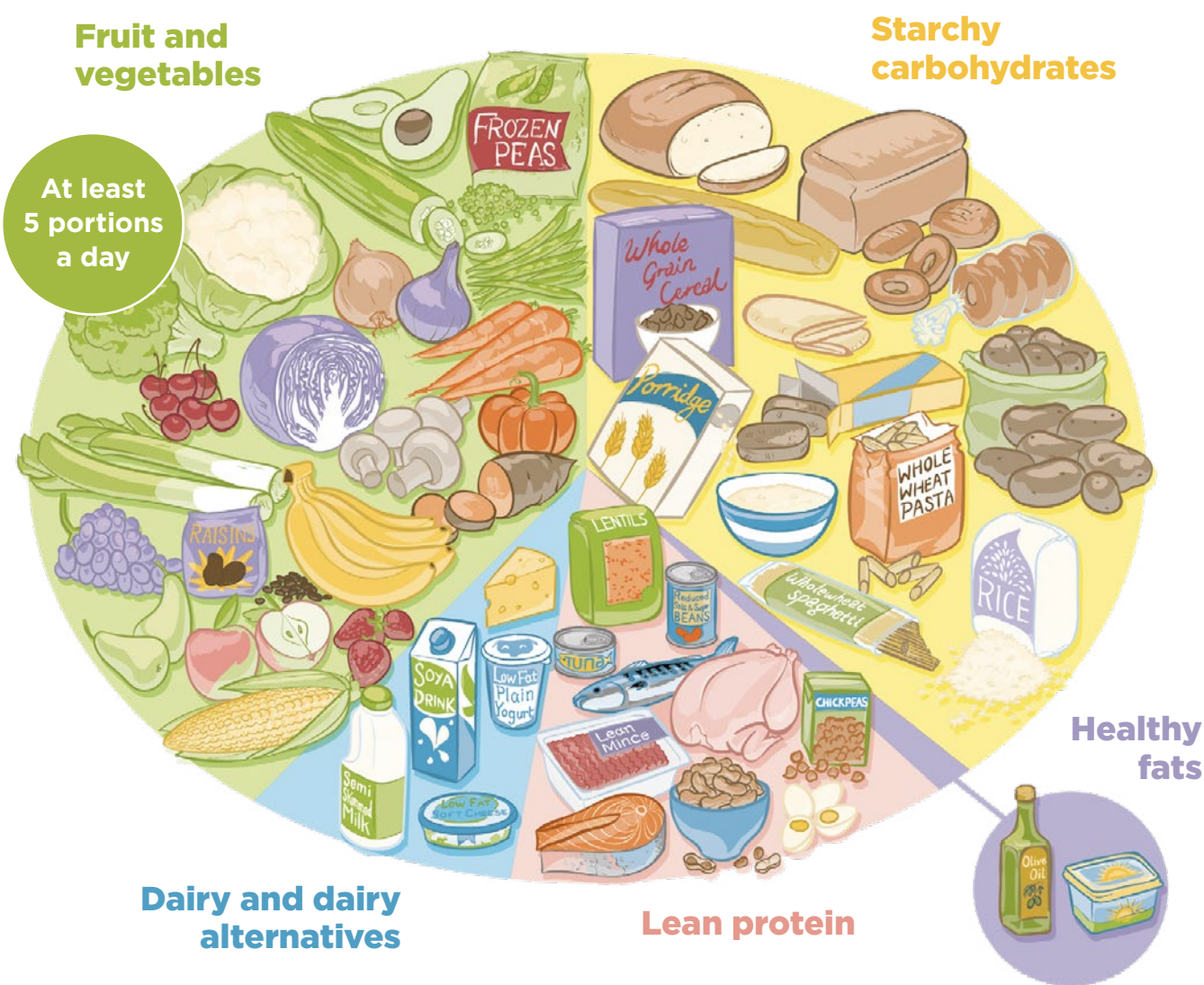


Lean protein helps your body stay strong throughout your cancer journey. Some examples include: white fish, plain Greek yogurt, beans and lentils, white poultry meat, and tofu.

HEALTHY EATING FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH OR BEYOND A BLADDER CANCER DIAGNOSIS

One diet often recommended for people diagnosed with bladder cancer is the Mediterranean diet. It's also an excellent choice for anyone looking to eat healthily.

The Mediterranean diet is based on a healthy balance of vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, whole-grains, and olive oil. For protein, focus on lean meats, oily fish, eggs, beans or legumes, and other non-dairy sources, such as a moderate amount of tofu.





THE EFFECT OF FOODS ON BLADDER CANCER

According to the Canadian Urological Association, although no high-quality studies have directly linked diet to bladder cancer, several associations have been identified.

A decreased risk of bladder cancer has been linked to diets containing higher amounts of carrots, cruciferous vegetables (broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts), and fruits.

Conflicting data suggest an increased risk of bladder cancer in those who have diets high in pork, barbecued meat, fat, and significant amounts of soy and coffee consumption.

SAMPLE *Recipes*

There are many recipes that have been developed to support wellness for people living with or beyond a bladder cancer diagnosis. Most of them are equally tasty and nutritious for all of us.

Here, we've included a few sample recipes, but you'll find a larger collection on the Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network's website at bcan.org.

Additionally, we offer a Sample Weekly Meal Plan with more linked recipes on our website at bladdercancercanada.org.



Carrot Ginger Soup

Provides 6g fibre, 23g protein and is an excellent source of vitamins A and C

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cashews, soaked
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2-inch piece of ginger, peeled and roughly chopped
- 3 cloves garlic, minced
- 9 medium carrots, chopped
- 1 tsp. turmeric
- 1 can coconut milk (400 ml)
- Sea salt to taste
- Fresh dill, to top

1. Soak cashews overnight or for 1 hour in warm water. Drain and set aside.
2. In a large pot, add water to just cover the bottom. Turn heat to medium. When water begins to steam, add onion, ginger, and garlic. Sauté for 2 minutes.
3. Add carrots and enough water to cover carrots. Simmer until carrots are cooked.
4. Add turmeric, cashews, and coconut milk. Blend with an immersion blender, or transfer to blender and blend until smooth. Add water for desired consistency and then salt to taste.
5. Serve, topped with fresh dill.



Simple Salad

Provides an average of 6g fibre, 10g protein and is an excellent source of vitamins A and C



Ingredients:

- Anything you have on hand!
- Greens
- Chopped veggies: radish, cucumber, red onion, beets, celery, broccoli, etc.
- Protein: Extra beans, chickpeas, nuts, or seeds
- Dressing: simple sea salt, lemon juice, and balsamic vinegar (add olive oil if you like!)
- Top with herbs for extra flavour: parsley, dill, cilantro, basil, mint, etc.

1. Combine all ingredients.
2. Store dry ingredients for up to 3 days for meal prep.
3. Add dressing as needed.

Pictured: Mixed greens, shredded carrots, beets, cucumber, radish, onion, chickpeas with sea salt, lemon juice, and balsamic vinegar, topped with fresh basil and mint.

Chickpea Sweet Potato Salad

Provides 10g fibre, 9g protein and is an excellent source of vitamins A and C



Ingredients:

- 1 cup dry chickpeas, soaked overnight (or if you prefer, canned chickpeas, drained & rinsed)
- 2 sweet potatoes, peeled, cubed, and then steamed
- 1 red onion, chopped
- ½ avocado, chopped into cubes
- ½ cup fresh dill, chopped
- 1 tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. mustard seed
- Splash of balsamic vinegar
- Sea salt to taste
- Sprouts of choice to top (kale, broccoli, etc.)
- Optional: Lettuce or cabbage (to serve as wraps)

1. Soak dry chickpeas overnight in water. Drain water and transfer chickpeas to a pot. Add 4 cups of water and bring to a boil, reduce to a simmer, cover and leave to cook for up to 90 minutes, until tender. Alternatively, can be cooked in a pressure cooker after soaking (or simply, use canned chickpeas).
2. Drain beans and mix all ingredients in a large bowl.
3. Delicious on its own or served on cabbage or lettuce leaves.

What Can I Eat to Offset Some of the Side Effects of Bladder Cancer Treatments?

Experiencing a metallic taste in the mouth is a common side effect of chemotherapy or after a radical cystectomy. To help, try using plastic or bamboo utensils instead of metal.

Changes in bowel movements, such as constipation or diarrhea, are also common. For constipation, ensure you drink plenty of fluids. Water is best, but also hot tea, coffee, broth, or soup can help get things moving.

For diarrhea, stay hydrated to replace the lost fluids, eat smaller meals throughout the day, and restore electrolytes by incorporating foods like apricots, bananas, broth, and nuts into your diet. Try consuming your beverages and meals at room temperature, and avoid greasy and spicy foods, dairy products, sugary drinks, caffeine, sugar-free candy or gum, and alcohol.

A “low-residue” diet can also help with diarrhea by limiting foods that stimulate bowel activity. Residue refers to any particles that remain in the large intestine after digestion. This

diet involves reducing your intake of meats, dairy, and high-fibre foods, such as whole-grains and raw fruit and vegetables.

If you’re experiencing severe constipation or diarrhea, talk to your medical team about suggested laxatives or anti-diarrheal medications such as loperamide or bismuth subsalicylate. For some, after a radical cystectomy, managing these symptoms may require incorporating medication into your regular routine.

If you have nausea, the aforementioned tips for controlling diarrhea and bowel issues are also helpful. It’s also important not to overeat.

If you’re experiencing hot flashes, marked by a sudden sensation of warmth in your face and upper body, hot foods and drinks, spicy foods, caffeine, or alcohol could be contributing factors. Try avoiding these foods and keeping a food journal to pinpoint your triggers.

Some drugs used to treat cancer can interact with food. It’s best to talk with your medical team about which foods to avoid. Also, tell your doctor about any food allergies you have.



AVOID BAD NUTRITION HABITS

Here are some key points to be mindful of when it comes to your eating habits:

1. Mindless Eating

Eating in front of the TV or computer can lead to overeating. Pay attention to what you're eating and savour each bite.

2. Skipping Meals

Skipping meals can lead to overeating later in the day. Try to eat regular, balanced meals and snacks to maintain steady energy levels.

3. Eating Too Quickly

Eating too quickly doesn't give your body time to register fullness, often leading to overeating. Chew your food slowly and again, savour each bite.

4. Late-Night Snacking

Eating late at night can disrupt your sleep and lead to weight gain. Try to finish your last meal at least 2-4 hours before bedtime.

5. Relying on Supplements

Whole foods should be your primary source of nutrients. However, in some cases, supplements may be helpful. This is especially true for those undergoing treatments like chemotherapy who may struggle with large meals and getting enough protein. But, always consult your doctor before adding any vitamins or herbs to your health routine, as some may interfere with treatment.

6. Not Planning Ahead

Lack of meal planning can lead to impulsive and unhealthy food choices. Plan your meals and snacks in advance to make healthier choices easier.





Smoking

IS THE NUMBER 1 RISK FACTOR

The best advice for smoking is don't. And, if you do smoke, quit.

Someone who smokes is up to six times more likely to develop bladder cancer than someone who does not smoke. The risk of bladder cancer increases with the number of years spent smoking and the number of cigarettes smoked per day.

Quitting is the most important thing someone who smokes can do to improve their health, especially when diagnosed with bladder cancer. Quitting can aid in post-operative recovery and reduce the risk of wound infections, heart complications and post-operative pulmonary complications like pneumonia. Also, patients diagnosed with non-muscle invasive bladder cancer who quit smoking are less likely to experience recurrence or progression of the disease when compared to those who continue smoking.

But, what's the most effective way to quit?

"The best way to quit smoking is with a combination of medication and counseling," says Maher Karam-Hage, M.D., medical director of the Tobacco Treatment Program at the MD Anderson Cancer Center. "They both help. But you double your chances by using both compared with one of them."



ONCE YOU QUIT, THE NEXT CHALLENGE IS TO "STAY QUIT." HERE ARE SOME WAYS TO RESIST THE URGE TO SMOKE:

- 🚫 Try nicotine replacement therapy. There are prescription drugs, patches, and gum available.
- 🚫 Avoid triggers, such as certain places, bars, or parties where you traditionally smoked.
- 🚫 If you feel the urge coming on, delay. Give yourself 10 more minutes and do something to distract yourself.
- 🚫 Chew gum or snack on carrots or nuts... something to occupy your mouth.
- 🚫 Don't be tempted to have "just one." It doesn't work.
- 🚫 Do something physical, like going for a walk, exercising, or working on a hobby to keep busy and distracted.
- 🚫 Try relaxation techniques, such as deep breathing, muscle relaxation, yoga, visualization, massage, or listening to calming music.
- 🚫 Join a virtual or an in-person support group.
- 🚫 Remind yourself of all the benefits of not smoking, such as feeling better, being healthier, not bothering loved ones with second-hand smoke, and saving money.

WHAT ABOUT **ALCOHOL?**

At this time, research shows no link between bladder cancer and alcohol, but there has been conflicting research into the effects of alcohol on our general health.

Heavy drinking is a major cause of preventable death in most countries. Heavy drinking can damage the liver and heart, harm an unborn child, increase the chances of developing breast and some other cancers, contribute to depression and violence, and interfere with relationships.

So, how much is safe to drink?

Here's what Canada's Guidance on Alcohol and Health recommends:

0 DRINKS PER WEEK

Not drinking has benefits, such as better health, and better sleep.

2 STANDARD DRINKS PER WEEK

You are likely to avoid alcohol-related consequences for yourself or others at this level.

3-6 STANDARD DRINKS PER WEEK

Your risk of developing several types of cancer, including breast and colon cancer, increases at this level.

7 OR MORE STANDARD DRINKS PER WEEK

Your risk of heart disease or stroke increases significantly at this level.



Each additional standard drink radically increases the risk of alcohol-related consequences.

Also it is recommended to limit yourself to two drinks per occasion to reduce other risks, such as injury to yourself or others.

No matter where you are on the continuum, for your health, less alcohol is better.



Get Moving FOR BETTER HEALTH

Regular physical activity is one of the most important things you can do for your health. Being physically active can improve your brain health, help manage weight, reduce the risk of disease, strengthen bones and muscles, and improve your ability to do everyday activities.



HOW MUCH EXERCISE IS ENOUGH?

In general, we know that some movement is better than none! Canada's 24-hour movement guidelines incorporate recommendations on physical activity, sleep, and sedentary behaviour.

The guidelines are tailored to different age groups and can help you plan your day to maintain an appropriate level of activity.

ADULTS 18-64

Physical Activity

Engage in a variety of types and intensities of physical activity, including:

- Moderate to vigorous aerobic physical activities that accumulate to at least 150 minutes per week.
- Muscle-strengthening exercises which target major muscle groups at least twice a week.

Sleep

Aim for 7 to 9 hours of good-quality sleep, maintaining consistent bed and wake-up times.

Sedentary Behaviour

Limit sedentary time to 8 hours or less per day, including:

- No more than 3 hours of recreational screen time.
- Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.

ADULTS 65+

Physical Activity

Engage in moderate to vigorous aerobic activities to accumulate at least 150 minutes a week, including:

- Muscle-strengthening exercises which target major muscle groups at least twice a week.
- Activities that challenge and improve balance.

Sleep

Aim for 7 to 8 hours of good-quality sleep, maintaining consistent bed and wake-up times.

Sedentary Behaviour

Limit sedentary time to 8 hours or less per day, including:

- No more than 3 hours of recreational screen time.
- Break up long periods of sitting as often as possible.

How Do I Measure How Hard I'm Working?

There are several methods to determine if you have reached moderate to vigorous activity levels:

- **The Rate of Perceived Exertion Scale:** This is a 10-point scale from 0 (nothing at all) to 10 (very, very heavy). You can download the scale from The Cleveland Clinic at my.clevelandclinic.org.
- **Talk test:** If you are doing moderate-intensity activity, you will be able to talk but not sing during the activity. More information can be found at the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention's website: cdc.gov.
- **Measure your heart rate:**
 - Gently place two fingers on the opposite wrist, slightly below the base of the thumb. Count the beats for 15 seconds and multiply by four. A resting heart rate is normally between 50-70 beats per minute.
 - Use an activity tracker. Most up-to-date activity trackers have built-in heart rate monitors, which can tell you when you are in a moderate intensity range. Check out the instructions for your specific tracker to determine how to do this appropriately.



Can I Exercise if I Have Bladder Cancer?

Absolutely! In fact, there is strong evidence to show that regular moderate-intensity exercise reduces anxiety, depressive symptoms, and fatigue, and improves quality of life and physical functioning in survivors of cancer (general to all cancer types). There is moderate evidence that regular moderate-intensity exercise improves sleep and bone health. For bladder cancer specifically, the evidence has focused on moderate-intensity exercise leading to improvements in quality of life and physical functioning. Exercise can also lower the risk of co-morbidities and reduce side effects, such as improving sexual function and bladder incontinence (see sources on page 35).

Exercise Considerations

PRIOR TO TREATMENT

Patients are encouraged to either maintain their pre-diagnosis activity levels or initiate an exercise routine as soon as possible. The goal is to maintain a healthy weight and stay active in a way that is safe for you. Try incorporating a short walk into your daily routine, or practice Kegel exercises, which can help manage side effects like incontinence and erectile difficulties following surgery. You can find detailed instructions on how to do Kegels in this guidebook under “Exercise Program” on page 19.

DURING TREATMENT

If you are still receiving treatment, keep in mind that any movement is beneficial for weight management and to help prevent muscle loss, even if it's just a 5-minute walk or getting up every hour to stretch.

During treatment, it is recommended you speak to your medical professional before starting an exercise program and seek a supervised program.

AFTER TREATMENT

If you are new to exercise, consult with your physician and seek supervised exercise. It is the safest way to start so, if possible, connect with a local physical therapist or exercise professional to set up a program that works for you.

If you had a previous exercise routine, start incorporating the low-intensity activities like walking, resistance training, stretching, and balance exercises into your daily routine. Even a brief 5-minute session can help mitigate the negative effects of sedentary behaviour on the body.



Free or low-cost exercise programs, specifically designed for people living with or beyond cancer are available as well. Do some online research to find a program in your area, or check out some of the services highlighted below:

- EXercise for Cancer to Enhance Living Well (EXCEL) is a research study providing exercise programs to rural and remote individuals living with and beyond cancer across Canada.
- Thrive Health provides evidence-based exercise resources for cancer survivors and expert training for fitness and health professionals.
- The Cancer Exercise app provides aerobic and resistance exercises for all fitness levels to improve quality of life, strength and endurance, as well as reduce fatigue and other side effects of cancer.
- Alberta Cancer Exercise (ACE) Home-Based Maintenance Program manual provides guidance for your tailored workout, where you are in control, with the goal of staying active.

Please remember, after surgery:

- If you have a stoma/urine pouch, make sure you empty it prior to exercising.
- Don't perform exercises that will increase pressure in your abdomen, such as double leg lifts and planks.
- You should try to avoid straining in any way and consider how you are lifting any weight.
 - If you are determined to resume weightlifting, consult your doctor or ostomy nurse about using a hernia prevention belt to support your abdomen during lifting.
 - Also, avoid the Valsalva maneuver during strength training – a technique to return an abnormal heart rhythm to normal, by pushing air out, with your nose pinched and mouth closed.
- Avoid contact sports (i.e., football or boxing) to avoid injury.
- Hydration is important during and after exercising.
- And overall, listen to your body! It's common for muscles to feel sore after a good workout, but you shouldn't experience pain, nausea, or dizziness.



Exercise PROGRAM

Created by Amy Sweeney at Kinnect Active Rehab

This exercise program is created as a safe way to start moving after receiving approval from your doctor, including if you are post-operative. It focuses on reconnecting with your pelvic floor, which can help reduce incontinence if it is an issue.

The breathing exercises can be started as soon as you feel ready.

If the suggested sets or reps feel too challenging, that's okay—take your time and gradually work up to them. Avoid pushing through pain higher than 5 out of 10. Instead, reduce the range of motion, repetitions, or sets until the pain decreases.

1

Umbrella 360 Breathing with Engagement (Kegel)

2 Sets / 1 Rep / 1 min duration

Lie on back with knees bent and feet flat on ground to help encourage a neutral spine and pelvic position.

Place fingers on your ribcage with thumbs on back of ribcage.

Take a deep breath in through nose, filling up your belly, ribs (which move out laterally), and back.

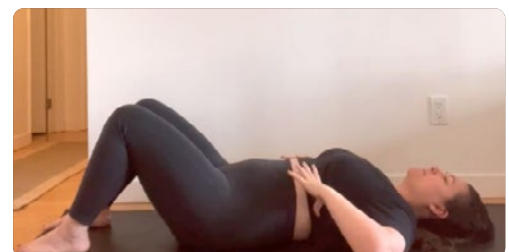
During the inhale, your belly should feel soft and squishy.

Exhale through your mouth with a soft noise (like you are fogging up a mirror) as you begin to pull up the pelvic floor. This should feel like you are holding in urine or gas.

As you continue to exhale, begin to also engage your lower abdominals as if you are trying to bring your hip bones together to meet in the centre of core.

Hold for a count of 3 and release.

Everything relaxes as you inhale and expand.



2

Bridges with Adduction Squeeze

3 Sets / 12 Reps

Lie on your back with knees bent directly over feet. Place a ball or towel in between knees.

Inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth as core is engaged and buttocks are tightened.

Drive hips up into the air as you squeeze the ball/towel with your inner thighs until there is no bend in the front of your hips.

Once at the top, imagine driving your knees over your toes towards the wall, and your heels towards your buttocks to help engage the posterior chain.

Inhale through your nose as you lower back down to the starting position.

Make sure you keep your pelvis level during this exercise, hold for the required time, and lower back down in a controlled manner. Also, make sure the lift originates from your bum, not your lower back.



3

Rock Backs with Modified Plank

3 Sets / 8 Reps

Start on your hands and knees with your hands slightly ahead of your shoulders and your knees under your hips.

Find a neutral position by moving through anterior pelvic tilt and posterior pelvic tilt until you achieve a balanced, neutral alignment.

Take a deep breath in through the nose as you begin to slowly sit back toward the heels, shifting the majority of weight into your lower body. Drop down as far as you would like. Exhale through the mouth as you squeeze your glutes and come back up onto all fours, shifting your weight into your upper body until your shoulders are above your wrists.

Maintain a neutral spine and engage your core in this position.

Inhale and lower your hips back toward your heels.

What You Should Feel:

- A gentle stretch in your glutes
- Improved spatial and body awareness

What You Should Not Feel:

- Pinching at the front of your hips
- Stretching in your lower back



4

Side Bird Dog

3 Sets / 12 Reps

Start on your hands and knees, with your hands under your shoulders, and your knees under your hips.

Make sure your back is flat.

Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth as you tighten your pelvic floor and stomach muscles.

Keeping in contact with the floor, slowly slide one arm out in front of you, while at the same time stretching your opposite leg out behind you.

Slide your arm and leg back into the starting position and then repeat on the other side.



5

Supine Pelvic Tilt

3 Sets / 12 Reps

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.

Inhale through the nose as you arch your back, drawing your hip bones closer to thighs.

Exhale through the mouth as you engage your core and pull up the pelvic floor, flattening your back against the ground and slightly lifting the bottom of buttocks off ground.

Ensure most of the effort comes from your bum and core, with your body staying stable without shifting or sliding up and down.



6

Supine Marching

3 Sets / 10 Reps

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor.

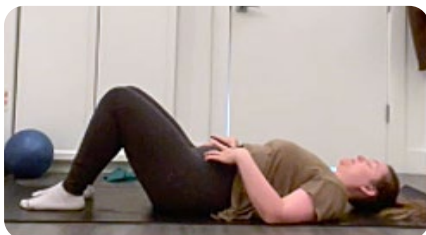
Inhale through your nose, filling your belly, ribs, and back. Exhale and engage your core as you lift one leg, bringing your knee to a 90-degree angle, stopping when knee is directly above your hip.

Avoid letting your knee drift inward or outward as you move your leg.

Slowly lower your leg back to the starting position and place your foot on the floor, either continuing to exhale or inhaling as your foot returns.

Ensure your hip stays grounded throughout the movement, and keep your core strong and square.

Repeat with the other leg.



7

Fire Hydrant

3 Sets / 12 Reps

Start on your hands and knees, with your hands under your shoulders, and knees under your hips.

Inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth as you engage your core.

Slowly raise your leg out to the side from the hip, keeping your hips square to the ground and minimizing any movement other than the leg.

Control the leg back to the starting position as you inhale.

Ensure you keep your elbows straight, chin tucked in, and spine long.

Repeat with the other leg.



Bear Lift - Knee Hover

3 Sets / 10 Reps / 2 sec duration

Start on your hands and knees with your hands under your shoulders and your knees under your hips.

Find a neutral spine, ensuring your head is in a neutral position with your gaze directed between your hands.

With your arms straight but not locked, push the heels of your hands into the floor so your shoulder blades flatten against your back.

Keeping this neutral position with your spine and shoulder blades, tuck your toes under.

Exhale through the mouth as you engage your core and lift your knees about 1cm off the floor.

Hold for a count of 2, then return your knees to the ground as you inhale through your nose.

Ensure your back stays straight, your shoulder blades remain in contact with your back throughout the movement, and your gaze is directed between your hands.



When Not to Exercise

DON'T exercise if you have:

- Severe nausea and vomiting
- Shortness of breath at rest or with minimal effort
- Unrelieved pain
- Extreme fatigue
- Severe muscle wasting (loss of muscle mass, strength, and functionality)
- Dizziness
- Unsafe heart rate or blood pressure values (too high or too low)

Please remember

- When starting a new exercise regimen, it's best to consult your physician or a certified exercise professional with training in cancer care, especially if you have any concerns or hesitations.
- Even a small amount of exercise is better than none. Our volunteers, with firsthand bladder cancer experience, often recommend simply walking for small amounts each day, especially after a radical cystectomy.



Getting enough ZZZZs

We all know that it's important to get a good night's sleep. Why? Because your body and your brain recharge during sleep. Adequate sleep helps reduce the risk of serious illness and lowers the frequency of sickness.

Research has shown a strong relationship between how long we sleep and heart health, reduced metabolic diseases such as diabetes, and maintaining a healthy weight. Other benefits of quality sleep include improved mood, reduced stress, and clearer thinking.

While many people seem to get by with six hours of sleep or less, most research shows that adults benefit from seven to nine hours of quality sleep.



FOR GETTING A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

Get some exercise throughout the day.

Before going to bed, avoid large meals and caffeine.

Drink plenty of fluids during the day but reduce intake a few hours before bed to avoid frequent urination at night.

Create a relaxing bedtime routine that includes gentle stretches, reading or meditation.

Make sure your bedroom is quiet, dark, relaxing, and at a comfortable temperature – cool is preferable.

Don't use electronic devices before sleeping. That means no TV, computers, smartphones, or tablets.

Empty your pouch before going to sleep to minimize nighttime interruptions.

Secure your pouch properly and ensure the skin around the stoma is clean and dry to prevent leaks or irritation that might wake you up.

Consider a nighttime drainage system or larger overnight pouch to avoid getting up to empty your neobladder or pouch during the night.

Opt for loose, breathable sleepwear to avoid irritating the stoma or pouch area.

Experiment with different sleeping positions that prevent pressure on the stoma and pouch.

If you're experiencing ongoing pain, discomfort or frequent sleep disruptions, talk to your doctor about pain medications or other potential suggestions.





THE IMPORTANCE OF *Stress Relief*

There's no denying that having cancer and undergoing treatment can be stressful and often depressing. Nearly a quarter of people with cancer show symptoms of stress or anxiety. That anxiety is commonly driven by several factors:

- Fear of cancer coming back or getting worse
- Negative thinking about the survival rate
- The burden of treatment schedules and long-term follow-ups
- Stress related to post-surgery symptoms
- Chemotherapy
- Uncertainty about surgery
- Being in the hospital
- Concern about the burden placed on family and friends

RELAXATION TIPS & TECHNIQUES

Research suggests that stress and anxiety can make bladder cancer harder to manage or treat. Managing how you cope with bladder cancer is an important element in your cancer journey. Below are some of the techniques you may find helpful to manage your stress and/or anxiety.

- **Relaxation exercises**, such as slow breathing and stretching your muscles, yoga, or tai chi.
- **Meditation** involves taking time to focus the mind on a single element, such as breathing. You might try mindfulness meditation guided by a therapist or doctor, or explore training videos online.
- **Deep breathing** and picturing a peaceful scene or setting, while listening to gentle music or nature sounds, or being silent if you prefer.
- **Massage therapy**, if your medical team approves that it will be safe for you.
- **Find creative outlets** for your emotions, such as playing music, creating art, writing, or spending time on your hobbies.
- **Spend quality time** with family, friends, or a pet.
- **Be physically active.**
- **Laugh** – it relieves tension and improves your mood.





Strong Relationships FOR **GOOD** **MENTAL HEALTH**

The benefits of strong social connections and deep friendships are numerous. Research has linked strong relationships to lower rates of anxiety and depression, higher self-esteem, greater empathy, and more trusting and cooperative relationships.

Strong, healthy relationships can also help to strengthen your immune system, help you recover from disease, and may even lengthen your life. Even when we move into our senior years, strong relationships continue to be important. They can offset loneliness and lower the risk of dementia and mental decline.

MAINTAINING OR CREATING STRONG RELATIONSHIPS

Remember that a cancer diagnosis can significantly impact your relationships, possibly bringing emotional, physical, and practical challenges that may affect connections with your loved ones. Partners, family, and friends may struggle to adapt to their new roles as caregivers or supporters, leading to feelings of loneliness, frustration, or even guilt.

Sustaining or rebuilding relationships after a cancer diagnosis involves open communication, acknowledging each other's feelings, setting realistic expectations, and seeking support when needed—whether through counseling, support groups, self-care, or simply spending quality time together.

Strong relationships are not discovered accidentally. They are built over time. Here are some of the ways that you can create new relationships or keep your relationships strong:

- Make a concerted effort to remain open and flexible to the other's needs.
- Set boundaries about what you don't want or like in your relationships, such as respecting one another's time.
- All relationships have disagreements and that's okay. What matters is how you talk and listen to one another. Listen to understand, rather than listening to respond. Don't be afraid to express your emotions or vulnerabilities with people you trust.
- Let go of control. A lot of life is about how we react to our experiences and encounters. Knowing that you can only control what you do and not what anyone else does will save you time and stress.
- Join a Bladder Cancer Canada Support Group to meet a community of people who can relate to your experiences.
- Try something new – a new activity could help you meet people and build stronger relationships, all while participating in an activity you mutually enjoy.

Some ideas are:

- Join a gym
- Join a birdwatching club
- Join a book club
- Join a knitting club
- Join a neighbourhood walking group
- Join a social club
- Volunteer at your local soup kitchen, animal shelter, or other community area

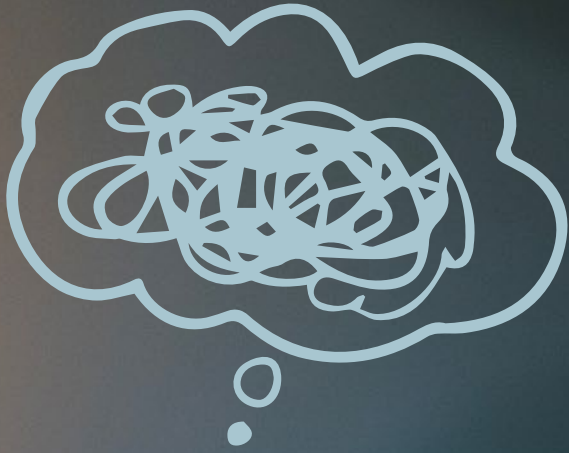


**IF YOU'RE UNSURE WHERE YOU CAN VOLUNTEER,
THE FOLLOWING SITES CAN HELP YOU FIND OPPORTUNITIES:**

[Bladder Cancer Canada](#)

[Volunteer Canada](#)

[Charity Village](#)



AVOID NEWS OVERDOSE

We are constantly bombarded with news and information through newspapers, television, radio, the Internet, and social media. Much of this content is cleverly designed to grab our attention and trigger our curiosity.

A significant portion of this material tends to lean towards the negative, particularly in this era marked by climate change, natural disasters, crime, and various military and political conflicts. In many ways, we are addicted to the consumption of news and social media.

Doomscrolling

“Doomscrolling,” or an excessive consumption of negative content, can have a damaging effect on our mental health. But how do we offset the impact of doomscrolling?

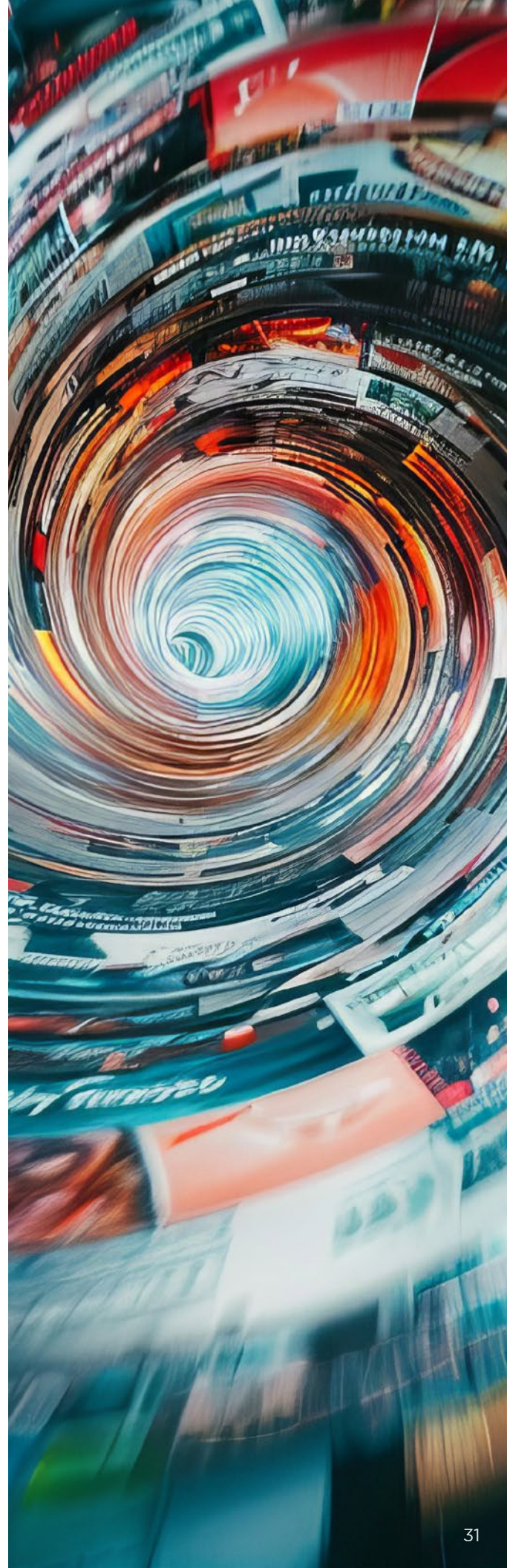
- **The moment that you realize what you’re doing, stop and find something else to do.**
- **Swearing off social media altogether can be too big of a leap for most people. Instead, think about ways you can alter how you use social media, such as setting a daily time limit spent on these platforms.**
- **When breaking a habit like doomscrolling, finding positive activities to supplement the time you spend reading news or viewing social media can make a big difference.**

DON'T FALL INTO THE INTERNET "RABBIT HOLE"

The Internet is an easy, fast way to access information. According to Statistics Canada, two-thirds of Canadians used the Internet to search for health information in 2020. But how do you know what is reliable and trustworthy and what is misinformation, misleading, or false?

How to Avoid Misinformation

Remember, anyone can post information on the Internet. This is especially true when it comes to health and nutritional information. Although answers seem easy to find, the Internet is full of contradictory information. For example, google “the reasons you should eat bananas” and then search for “the reasons to never eat bananas.” You’ll get multiple results for both searches. That’s because there are pros and cons to everything, but sometimes your search results are just someone’s opinion.



Tips THAT CAN HELP YOU FIND RELIABLE INFORMATION ONLINE

- **Check the source.** Governments, hospitals, health units, and universities are usually reliable sources of information. If a third-party website references information from one of these sources, check the original source.
- **Be cautious of research studies found online.** There are studies hitting the news every day and sometimes one study may directly contradict another. Remember, not all studies use reliable methodology, and some are sponsored by corporations or special interest groups who may influence which results are made public. Always check to see if studies and surveys are endorsed or reviewed by trusted sources, or supported by Bladder Cancer Canada and/or our Medical Advisory Board Members.
- **Beware of websites promoting a supplement, device, or treatment that is then offered for sale on the site.** It may just be a way to make money, whether the product is effective or not.
- **Be careful of people who promote themselves as “doctors,” “professionals,” or “specialists.”** They may not be legitimately licensed, trained, or regulated. Research their backgrounds.
- **Take ratings with a grain of salt.** It’s easy to fake reviews and there are even companies that can be paid to do favourable reviews.

Here are some
“RED FLAG” words
that are a tell-tale
sign that information
is likely not reliable:

Information that is
“secret,” “hidden,”
or **“only a few people
know about”**.

A product that is **“taking
the Internet (or anything
else) by storm”**.

Non-medical treatments
or supplements that
“cure” diseases or
conditions.

Products or treatments
that drug companies,
doctors, or governments
“won’t tell you about”.

Whenever you find information on the Internet that interests you, see if you can find additional, independent sources to verify the information. When in doubt, it may be helpful to discuss it with a medical professional or nutrition specialist who you trust and have an existing relationship with.

About

BLADDER CANCER CANADA (BCC)



We are a national charity with a mission to:

- **Help bladder cancer patients and their support teams address the day-to-day issues of this disease**
- **Increase awareness of bladder cancer among the general public and medical community**
- **Fund research which pursues the diagnosis, treatment, and elimination of bladder cancer**

Bladder cancer awareness among Canadians is at a relatively early stage. There is little public awareness of the symptoms of the disease and, unless diagnosed with this cancer, most people are not well-educated about it.

Bladder Cancer Canada is working to change this.

SPECIAL THANK YOU NOTES

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The project manager and editor of the Patient Guidebook series for Bladder Cancer Canada was Stephen Wilson.

We are grateful to those whose generous financial support has made this guidebook possible.



GET INVOLVED

As the first and only Canadian patient advocacy organization dedicated to bladder cancer issues, **Bladder Cancer Canada** is proud to provide patients, their caregivers, and families with support and resources to help navigate a bladder cancer diagnosis. Bladder Cancer Canada does not receive any government funding and relies on donations to offer programs and services, such as this guidebook, to patients and their families free of charge.

Support Us

Individual donations are greatly appreciated and can be made online at bladdercancer canada.org or by calling 1-866-674-8889. Your support will help Bladder Cancer Canada to continue and expand our programs and services to help even more patients and caregivers.

Walk with Us

You can support the bladder cancer community in two ways: join us for Canada Walks for Bladder Cancer in cities across the country every September, or participate anytime, anywhere by “Stepping Out”—whether you walk, run, bike, swim, or roll. These events play a vital role in our mission to raise awareness, support bladder cancer patients, and fund innovative research. The funds raised each September account for around two-thirds of our annual income.

Help create a world where bladder cancer is just a memory. Learn more at BCCwalk.ca.

Volunteer & Spread the Word

Our volunteers support others facing a similar diagnosis, advocate for others, plan awareness events and much more.

You can make a difference by simply sharing information about bladder cancer and Bladder Cancer Canada with your friends, family, and healthcare providers.

To learn how you can get involved—or to find help yourself—visit bladdercancer canada.org. There, you'll find reliable information, active discussion forums to ask questions or share your story, details about our support programs, volunteer opportunities, and the option to sign up for our e-newsletter to stay informed about upcoming events and research updates.



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We wish you strength and success as you navigate your bladder cancer diagnosis.

CONTACT US TODAY.






We are here to help.

For more information, visit our website at **bladdercancercanada.org**

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