

Healthy living

Healthy lifestyle advice for
childhood cancer survivors

Why do I need to keep healthy?

You might wonder why you should try and keep healthy. Making healthy lifestyle choices is very important for people who have survived cancer. We know that treatment given to help cure your cancer can sometimes affect your health later in life. This factsheet gives you the facts on what can help lessen these effects and how you can introduce them into your daily routine.

Why should I eat well?

A balanced diet will help your body and mind stay healthy - you really are what you eat! It's recommended that you drink lots of water and eat three meals every day that include a variety of fresh foods. There are many sources of information to help you think about what you are eating and how to cook your meals on a budget.

Published in conjunction
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for teenage and young
adult survivors of
childhood cancer

www.aftercure.org



Fresh is best as ready meals are often full of sugar, salt and artificial ingredients. Cooking your meals using fresh meat, fruit and vegetables can not only be enjoyable, tasty and cheap, but it will also give your body the nutrients that it needs to fight infections and disease.

Don't forget to look at the ingredients in your drinks too. There are often hidden sugars in drinks which contribute to weight gain and can also affect your teeth. Your GP can help you with healthy eating advice and there is lots of online information to help too:

nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/eatwell-plate.aspx

nhs.uk/Livewell/healthy-recipes/Pages/Healthy-recipes.aspx

youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/better_mental_health/look_after_yourbody

nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/change-for-life.aspx

Why should I keep active?

Being active helps you maintain a healthy weight and is good for your bones and joints. This is because your bones may be slightly weaker or you may have pain in your joints because of your cancer treatment.





Physical activity can help relieve this and there are lots of ways to be active which doesn't have to involve going to the gym or running marathons. Activities such as walking up the stairs, gym classes, dancing, playing sports or taking the dog for a walk are all good for your health.

When you move more, it not only helps your bones and joints but also helps your mind as your brain releases chemicals that make you feel more positive.

Going for walks is a great starting point and you can slowly build up to more vigorous exercise if you want to. There are lots of websites to help you get started and you can talk to your Aftercare team or your GP to find out which activities are safe for you to do. They might even be able to refer you to trainers or other teams that would be happy to help.

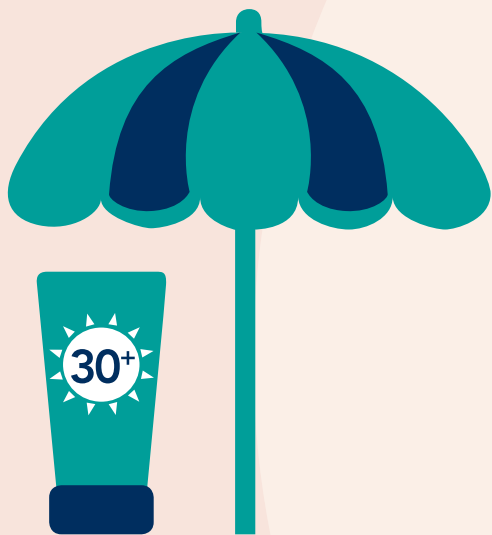
wcrf-uk.org/uk/here-help/health-tools/exercise-calorie-calculator

youngminds.org.uk/for_children_young_people/better_mental_health/exercise_mental_health

nhs.uk/change4life/Pages/be-more-active.aspx

Why should I be careful in the sun?

Healthy sun exposure can boost your Vitamin D levels which is important for your bones and general mood. However, it is dangerous for anyone to stay in the sun for too long, particularly if you have already been treated for cancer.



- Always make sure that you are using at least Factor 30 sunscreen.
- Spend plenty of time in the shade to avoid burning.
- Always keep an eye out for any changes on your skin especially moles, and always seek help if you are unsure from your Aftercare team or GP.

Sun beds are not safer than the sun and they still increase your risk of skin cancers!

nhs.uk/Livewell/Summerhealth/Pages/vitamin-D-sunlight.aspx
cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/causes-of-cancer/sun-uv-and-cancer



Why do I need to see my dentist regularly?

Cancer treatment can lead to dental problems in the future so looking after your teeth is important. Brush your teeth twice a day and make sure you regularly visit your dentist who will identify any treatment or extra care that you may need to consider.

nhs.uk/livewell/dentalhealth/Pages/Dentalhome.aspx

Why do I need to stop smoking?

Smoking is bad for everyone but especially if you have already had a significant health issue like cancer. If you smoke, expect to be asked about whether you want to stop each time you come for your check up with any healthcare professional.

Smoking increases your chances of getting other cancers in the future not to mention the fact that it causes your breath to smell of smoke and can cause yellowing of your teeth. It also increases your risk of heart and other vascular diseases causing potentially serious problems such as strokes. Your Aftercare team or GP can work with you and offer you support, guidance and medication to try and stop smoking.

nhs.uk/smokefree

[//smarttools.change4life.co.uk/#quitsmoking](http://smarttools.change4life.co.uk/#quitsmoking)

Can I drink alcohol?

National guidelines state that there is no safe level of alcohol consumption. Men and women are advised not to regularly drink more than 14 units of alcohol per week – 6 glasses of wine or 6 pints of beer per week.



Your liver gets rid of toxins in your body and it had to work very hard during your cancer treatment so your body could cope with toxins such as chemotherapy. Alcohol is also a toxin and so excessive alcohol, especially binge drinking, can put your liver under more stress which can lead to liver damage and can also cause cancer. Alcohol is also classed as a drug and can have mental health consequences including addiction and depression.

drinkaware.co.uk/check-the-facts/what-is-alcohol/daily-guidelines
wcrf-uk.org/uk/here-help/health-tools/alcohol-calorie-calculator
talktofrank.com
nhs.uk/Livewell/drugs/Pages/Dodrugsdamagebrain.aspx

It is advised that you shouldn't regularly drink more than 14 units per week:

175ml glasses of 13% wine:



568ml pints of 4% lager or ale:



568ml pints of 4.5% cider:



25ml glasses of 40% spirits:



The new government guidelines for men and women came into effect from 8th January 2016 and suggest it is best to spread this evenly across the week.

Data taken from Drinkaware (2016) New government alcohol unit guidelines. Available at: [<https://www.drinkaware.co.uk/check-the-facts/what-is-alcohol/new-government-alcohol-unit-guidelines>] Accessed on 31/03/2016.

What about sex and pregnancy?

It is essential for every single person to practice safe sex to avoid sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). If you use a condom, you will reduce your chances of contracting viruses that can then lead to cancers. You may also have been told that your treatment has affected your chances of having children, but until this has been confirmed by a doctor, you must also assume that unprotected sex could lead to pregnancy.

www.nhs.uk/Livewell/STIs/Pages/Sexualactivitiesandrisk.aspx

Why do I need follow-up tests?

Some of your cancer treatment may affect your future health and your Aftercare team will advise you on what screening tests you need depending on your medical history. This makes sure that any problems are identified as early as possible when they may be easier to treat. Ignoring these problems won't make them go away and can sometimes mean more treatment for longer.

nhs.uk/Livewell/Screening/Pages/screening.aspx

Why should I examine myself?

Most young adults who have been successfully treated for cancer go on to live healthy lives but there is always a possible risk of developing a further cancer in the future. Knowing your own body is important and we encourage everyone to examine themselves regularly. This includes checking your skin, breasts or testes for any changes, lumps or bumps. Detecting changes early can improve the chances of successful treatment. The Aftercare team will advise you on how to do this but you can also visit the website below for more information. If you do spot any changes or are worried then please see your doctor.

cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/cancer-symptoms/how-do-i-check-for-cancer

If there is anything in this factsheet that you don't understand or have any questions about then please contact your local Aftercare team who will be able to help.



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Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group is a leading children's cancer charity and the UK and Ireland's professional association for those involved in the treatment and care of children with cancer. Each week in the UK and Ireland, more than 30 children are diagnosed. Two out of ten children will not survive their disease.

We bring together childhood cancer professionals to ensure all children receive the best possible treatment and care. We fund and support research into childhood cancers, and we help young patients and their families with our expert, high quality and award-winning information resources.

If you have any comments on this factsheet, please contact us.

CCLG publications on a variety of topics related to children's cancer are available to order or download free of charge from our website.