

Cancer Care Companion

Thriving at Home During the New Normal

Issue 107

Finding a Treatment Plan that Works for You



When our bodies and minds are healthy, we are able to do the things in life that bring us joy, like spending time with friends and family, traveling, playing our favorite sport, exploring new hobbies, or enjoying a million other uniquely fulfilling activities. For this reason, when we don't feel well, we seek help from doctors we trust to diagnose what's wrong and to guide us toward the most effective treatment, whether that's medication, surgery, or more intense treatments, such as chemotherapy or radiation.

So why then, when we entrust our doctors with our health, do we not always follow through on their advice? As patients, we often don't fill new or existing prescriptions on time (or at all, in some cases) or we don't follow the designated schedule or dosage guidelines. In fact, World Health Organization estimates that, among patients with cancer, approximately 50% do not take medications as prescribed for a variety of reasons.^{1,2} And, unfortunately, there are very real risks associated with not adhering to a prescribed treatment plan: unnecessary disease progression, reduced functional abilities and quality of life, additional medical costs or physician visits, even increased risk of morbidity and death.²

Bone Health Exercise Chest Press Seated



This exercise works large and small muscles of the upper body. The only equipment you need is a resistance band or tube, which are available for sale online. *(continued on page 2)*

There are many reasons why you, and many other patients, may not follow a physician's recommendations:³

- Medications and medical devices can be expensive and cost can easily become an issue.⁴
- Remaining motivated can be hard when we can't tell whether a medication or treatment is really working or even necessary.
- Keeping up with multiple medications and complex dosing schedules can be tricky.

The reason why we, as patients, don't follow our physicians' advice can only be fully understood and appreciated by taking a more holistic and compassionate look at our lives and values. For example, many cancer patients start out with a deep desire to carefully follow the treatment plan prescribed by their oncologist only to find the chemotherapy-induced fatigue to be too debilitating while trying to meet the demands of family and a full-time job. But with health benefits inextricably linked to full-time employment, not working is not an option and so chemo cycles get skipped.

Other patients have every intention of staying on a particular drug protocol until they realize the impact that medication is having on other valued aspects of their lives. A drug that interferes with your libido could significantly impact an intimate relationship. A drug that causes diarrhea could make social situations awkward. The examples go on and on. A closer examination of the nuanced causes behind why we don't comply with a doctor's recommendations often reveals this truth: we are all human. And life is a complex balance of desires, values, responsibilities, and realities.

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Recipe Rainbow Smoothie



Smoothies are a good way to add fruits, vegetables and yogurt into your diet, and can be a good source of protein.⁶ *(Recipe on page 3)*

Enlist the help of a loved one or friend who can help remind you of your “why” when things get tough.



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If you find yourself struggling to follow a medication or treatment plan prescribed by your doctor for any reason, take the following steps to help get your care back on track without resorting to skipping doses or leaving prescriptions unfilled:

- Reflect on your reasons for going to see your doctor in the first place. What are the joyful things in your life that your health — in particular, your bone health — is keeping you from enjoying? Write these down and keep them close so that you can be constantly reminded of your “Why” (as in: “These are the reasons why I want to feel better and why it’s so important for me to closely follow my physician’s instructions.”)
- Talk with your doctor. Share your situation, discuss your concerns, and work with him or her to shape a revised plan that better fits your life, your values, and your needs. Trust that your doctor wants to help you and can likely point you to resources (such as financial aid or a social worker) or to alternative treatment plans that better support your situation.

- Enlist the help of a loved one or friend who can help remind you of your “why” when things get tough and, if necessary, can help you remember the correct timing and dosage of your medications.

Remember that there is no shame in being human. Balancing treatment recommendations — and all the challenges these may surface — with other essential aspects of your life can feel overwhelming, but you are not alone, and your doctor is here to help. One day you may even share the challenges you overcame and it will become someone else’s survival guide.

Bone Health Exercise

Chest Press Seated

(continued from page 1)

Putting stress on muscles also puts (good) stress on the bones which builds bone health.⁵

- Sit at the front edge of a chair with a tall posture.
- Place the center of the band or tube on your upper back and hold one end in each hand.
- Start with bent elbows then press your arms straight in front of you like you’re doing a pushup in the air.
- Move your arms out and in for a count of three using your chest muscles.
- Complete two sets of 10 repetitions each.
- Keep track of your sets and repetitions.

Modification: If you want more challenge, do this exercise while standing.

Visit www.Thrivors.com for more research-based exercises for cancer survivors.



Visit SupportYourBones.com for more information.

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Recipe

Rainbow Smoothie

Recipe adapted from the Institute of Functional Medicine's Phytonutrient Spectrum Food Plan

Yogurt and greens are a great source of protein, Vitamin D, and Vitamin K which are known to support bone health.^{6,7,8}

Makes 2 Servings (8-10 oz. each)



To make your smoothie as healthy as possible, make them at home from fresh ingredients whenever possible.

Ingredients

½ cup brewed green tea (cold) OR ½ teaspoon Matcha green tea powder
1 – 1 ½ cups unsweetened vanilla almond milk
½ cup plain Greek yogurt
½ cup fresh or frozen berries
½ cup other fresh or frozen fruit such as cherries, banana, or mango
2 cups baby spinach or kale
¼ avocado (optional for a creamier texture)
1 dried, pitted date, chopped (optional for a sweeter flavor)
1 ½ tablespoon ground flaxseed meal or chia seeds
¼ teaspoon cinnamon
⅛ teaspoon ground ginger
1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice

Instructions

1. Add prepared green tea and almond milk to blender. If using Matcha green tea powder instead of brewed green tea, increase the amount of almond milk to 1 ½ cups.
2. Add the remaining ingredients.
3. Blend at very low speed until ingredients are mixed, then gradually increase speed to high and blend well for 1 minute.
4. Serve immediately

Nutrition information per serving:

Calories 167; Total Fat 10g; Saturated Fat 1g; Carbohydrate 18g; Fiber 10g; Protein 7g; Sodium 184mg

"I enjoy having a smoothie everyday. Because of my [advanced] cancer, I can't always eat a full meal, so I like knowing that I am getting the vitamins I need for my body and my bones."



The information in this newsletter is provided as an educational resource. Before undertaking any physical activity or exercise program you should consult with your physician and healthcare team.

References: 1. World Health Organization. Adherence to long-term therapies. ISBN 92 4 154599 2. 2003. <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/42682/9241545992.pdf>. 2. Chisholm-Burns MA, Spivey CA. The 'cost' of medication nonadherence: consequences we cannot afford to accept. *J Am Pharm Assoc* (2003). 2012;52(6):823-826. doi:10.1331/JAPhA.2012.11088. 3. FDA. Are you taking medication as prescribed? Consumer Updates. 2009. <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/are-you-taking-medication-prescribed>. 4. Heath S. Rising out-of-pocket drug costs spur patient financial woes. Patient Engagement HIT. 2017. <https://patientengagementhit.com/news/rising-out-of-pocket-drug-costs-spur-patient-financial-woes>. 5. Winters-Stone KM, Dobek J, Bennett JA, Nail LM, Leo MC, Schwartz A. The effect of resistance training on muscle strength and physical function in older, postmenopausal breast cancer survivors: a randomized controlled trial. *J Cancer Surviv*. 2012;6(2):189-199. doi:10.1007/s11764-011-0210-x. 6. Harvard School of Public Health. Nutrition source: Yogurt and health. 2020. <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/food-features/yogurt/>. 7. NIH. Office of Dietary Supplements. Vitamin K fact sheet. 2020. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/pdfs/factsheets/VitaminK-Consumer.pdf>. 8. NIH. Office of Dietary Supplements. Vitamin D fact sheet. 2020. <https://ods.od.nih.gov/pdfs/factsheets/VitaminD-Consumer.pdf>.