

Promoting physical activity and rehabilitation support in CAR T

This document aims to provide an overview of physical activity and rehabilitation support needs. It is not a substitute for appropriately qualified professionals but may be helpful for others in the multi-disciplinary team.



Why is increasing physical activity and rehabilitation important?

Encouraging patients with haematological cancer to be more physically active can improve a range of outcomes such as:

- emotional wellbeing
- strength and fitness
- fatigue
- function and quality of life

It can be particularly beneficial to support patients in the lead up to significant periods of treatment, such as CAR T-cell therapy – this preparation can form part of ‘prehabilitation’ for CAR T-cell therapy.

- Most cancer services, including CAR T, do not yet have dedicated services for prehabilitation and rehabilitation. However, there can be huge benefits in discussing and promoting physical activity with your patients and directing them, where available, to support in your centre or local communities.
- Prehabilitation is recommended to be ‘multi-modal’ and should incorporate promotion of physical activity, nutritional support and psychological support as indicated.



ASK

Ask patients about their physical activity levels.

Every contact counts – ask patients about physical activity at each encounter and at key parts of the pathway.



ADVISE

Offer to share some of the benefits of being physically active during treatment.

Advise patients to be active, some activity is better than none.



ACT

Signpost to resources to guide patients to become more active and exercise at home.

Refer patients where indicated to local rehabilitation services or exercise support services.

Exercise is medicine in oncology: Engaging clinicians to help patients move through cancer. <https://doi.org/10.3322/caac.21579>




ASK and ASSESS

Enquiry from their healthcare team, particularly from their medical and nursing specialists, promotes a belief that physical activity is an important part of their assessment and care.

When to ask?

- On referral
- During admission/discharge
- During holistic needs assessment
- During/after bridging therapy
- Follow-up appointments

Consider assessing physical activity as part of your pathway using the [Physical Activity Vital Sign Questions](#)  which is recommended as part of the NHS Cancer Outcomes and Service Data set:

1. On average, how many days per week do you engage in moderate to strenuous exercise (like a brisk walk)?
2. On average, how many minutes do you engage in exercise at this level?

Total minutes per week of physical activity (multiply 1. by 2.)

Optional Question (particularly important for older adults):

How many days a week do you perform muscle strengthening exercises, such as bodyweight exercises or resistance training?



ADVISE

Share with patients that increased physical activity before treatment can help them feel more in control, mentally prepared and potentially increase physical readiness for treatment and recovery.

UK Guidelines [↗](#) recommend that all adults, including those with cancer, aim to engage in:

- at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity aerobic exercise per week.
 - Moderate intensity is an increase in breathing and heart rate enough that you could still talk, but not sing during the activity.
- resistance or muscle strengthening activities at least 2 days each week.
- activities that improve balance and co-ordination are also recommended 2 days each week for those older than 65 years or at risk of falls.

These recommendations may seem like a lot. Encourage patients by advising them:

- that some activity is better than none
- to increase their activity in small amounts as they feel able
- that being more active will increase the benefits felt

At a minimum, patients should be advised to move more and sit less.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOU TO HAVE ACTIVE CONVERSATIONS WITH YOUR PATIENTS

[Moving Medicine](#) [↗](#)



ACT ► REFER

What if you think a patient needs support with increasing their activity or has functional concerns that limit their ability to be active?

Rehabilitation support may be required for patients before they can increase their physical activity independently. Referral to physiotherapy and other services may be required patients who have:

- loss of mobility
- difficulty with activities of daily living
- poor performance status
- history of falls
- experienced side effects such as fatigue, breathlessness and pain or other concerns
- co-morbidities

Find out what physiotherapy and/or occupational therapy services exist within your centre and how to refer patients for support. If your centre does not provide outpatient rehabilitation services, then refer patients to their local community rehabilitation service.

- Many local councils offer 'exercise on referral' services for people with long term conditions, sometimes specifically for cancer patients.
- Some charities offer exercise services for people with cancer. Search for such services in your patient's local area.

RESOURCES TO FIND REHABILITATION AND WELLBEING SERVICES FOR YOUR PATIENTS

[Cancer Care Map.org](#) [↗](#)



ACT ► SIGNPOST

Signposting people to online resources can be helpful when specific exercise support may not be available locally or for patients may prefer to exercise at home.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT YOUR PATIENTS TO BE MORE ACTIVE

[Blood Cancer UK - Physical activity videos](#) [↗](#)

[Anthony Nolan - Prehab Information](#) [↗](#)

[Lymphoma action - Getting ready for treatment](#) [↗](#)

[We Are Undefeatable - Cancer Exercises](#) [↗](#)