

Cancer Creates...

STRENGTH • COURAGE • HOPE



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PATIENT PERSPECTIVES

What I've Learned From Exercising With Cancer: Listen To Your Body

By: Christine Flatt



I teach spin and bootcamp at Valley's fitness center, *Valley LifeStyles*, and I'm currently undergoing treatment for Stage 2 Triple Negative Breast Cancer at Valley-Mount Sinai Comprehensive Cancer Care. Figuring out how to exercise while undergoing treatments has been a challenge. However, learning to give my body what it needs has given me more strength than any exercise could.

There is no one-size-fits-all formula. All I can do is listen to my body and give it what it wants. Some days I'm able to exercise as I teach my classes, while other days chemotherapy takes a toll on my body. Somedays, I

can only teach by speaking the exercises. When I'm feeling very sick, I rest and save my energy to care for my children.

Most cancer patients can benefit from exercise, regardless of physical capability. It only takes a little for your body to release endorphins to make you feel more relaxed and energized. Since beginning treatment, exercising has helped reduce my anxiety and keep a more positive mindset for facing the stress, worry and pain of having cancer.

It's important to find which exercises work best for you. If a high cardio workout isn't your speed, then try a low-impact activity such as yoga or walking. Fitness instructors can modify most exercises to match your ability. It's also OK to do half or less of a fitness class if your body has had enough.

The best thing you can do for yourself is to keep moving and do as much of your normal routine as possible. You may not be able to do what you're used to doing, but you can do your best and live each day to the fullest. Stay strong!

INSPIRATION

PFAC: Representing the Needs of Patients

No one knows more about what patients want than the patients themselves. This is why two former patients, Karen Mitchell and Valerie Colangelo, have volunteered their time to represent the needs of patients as members of our Oncology Patient Family Advisory Council (PFAC). The Oncology PFAC is a group of patients, survivors and caregivers that meet with oncology staff members monthly to help them make decisions about patient care and services.

"As a breast cancer survivor, it's very rewarding to serve on the Oncology PFAC," said Karen. "We can give valuable insights on what is working and what can be improved in key areas of the patient experience."

Valerie, who was hospitalized at Valley for Lupus and Gullian-Barre Syndrome, has shared her patient experience with our

staff to emphasize the importance of compassionate care. "Valley's staff treated me like family, even when I was fully paralyzed," said Valerie. "Compared to other facilities, the compassionate care I received at Valley was unparalleled. I volunteer for this PFAC to ensure this high standard of treatment continues at all Valley locations."

The Oncology PFAC meets the second Tuesday of every month from 11 a.m. to noon. If you are interested in becoming a member, please contact **Pam Bell**, VHS Director and Patient Experience Officer, at revbell@valleyhealth.com.



COMPREHENSIVE CANCER CARE

INTEGRATIVE HEALING

Ecotherapy: Connecting with Nature to Improve Your Health

*"Bare feet on the Earth,
Breathing in and out,
Sound of wind in the trees,
Only this ... and this is more than enough."*

– "Only This" by Kai Seidenburg

Being with nature can be a therapeutic part of healing for cancer patients and their families. Our connection with all of life enables us to reap the benefits of spending time in nature.

Ecotherapy is done at a relaxed, slow pace to experience the natural surroundings all around us. Finding a wooded area, a nature park, your own backyard, even standing or sitting under a tree and taking a deep breath are places to connect with nature. Going up to a city building roof or focusing on a picture of a natural landscape and visualizing being there using all of your senses can also have some health benefits.

You can practice ecotherapy by taking a walk, meditating, lying on the ground, going barefoot, noticing your body's connection to the Earth beneath you, star-gazing, noticing flora and fauna or watching the movement and sounds of a nearby body of water.

Benefits of Ecotherapy can include less fatigue, improved sleep, better mood, reduced stress and calmer and rejuvenated body, mind and spirit.

EVENTS

Cancer Survivorship Series: Coping with the Trauma of Cancer

When: Wednesday, May 15, 6 to 7:30 p.m.

Where: Luckow Pavilion, 2nd Floor Conference Room

Join us as Dr. Cyndi Koch and Dr. Linda Centeno from The Koch Center discuss the ways in which the trauma of cancer impacts patients, as well as interventions to help you manage, cope and move beyond the trauma.

To register, please contact **Brooke Laster, LCSW**, at 201-634-5787 or blaster@valleyhealth.com.

Celebration of Life Honoring Survivors and Caregivers

When: Sunday, May 19; Registration is from 10 to 11 a.m. and the show is from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Where: Medieval Times, 149 Polito Avenue, Lyndhurst, NJ

You are cordially invited to celebrate Valley's 30th Annual Celebration of Life honoring survivors and caregivers with a medieval lunch and tournament! Please RSVP by Wednesday, May 15, at 201-634-5707 or survivor@valleyhealth.com.

NUTRITION

Creamy Spring Orzo

Total Time: 25 minutes
Side Dish/Main Dish*
Servings: 6

Ingredients:

- 1 1/2 cups orzo
- 3 cups chicken broth
- 1 cup frozen peas
- 2-3 tbs pesto
- 1/4 cup goat cheese
- 1/2 tsp salt



Instructions:

1. Combine orzo and broth in a medium sauce pan and bring to a boil.
2. Cover, lower heat, and simmer until liquid is absorbed, about 20 minutes.
3. Add peas, pesto, cheese and salt.
4. Stir until combined.
5. Serve.

*Turn this into a main dish by adding chicken or shrimp.

Author: Chellie Schmitz, "Art From My Table" food blog.
www.artfrommytable.com.

Share Your Story with Us!

Have an inspiring story or helpful tip to share for our next *Cancer Creates*? Contact **Joy Dolan**, VHS Communications & Marketing Associate, at 201-291-6392 or jdolan@valleyhealth.com.

There's More Online

Visit ValleyHealthCancerCenter.com to:

- Learn more about Valley-Mount Sinai cancer services
- View upcoming events, classes and support groups
- Read more issues of *Cancer Creates*

