



## April is Cancer Awareness Month

Cancer is the second leading cause of death in Canada. There are very few Canadians who can say that their lives have not been adversely affected by cancer in some way. National health care cost for cancer is soaring and the personal cost is priceless.

As devastating as cancer is in our society there is hope. The survival rate for most cancers is growing exponentially each decade due to early detection and new and improved treatments.

Prevention and awareness programs focusing on stopping smoking and avoiding second hand smoke, preventing sun

exposure and promoting proper nutrition such as a reduction of fat and an increase in fibre in our diet have also had a significant impact on lowering the incidence and mortality rate of cancer.

Interestingly, recent research has indicated that exercise can play a significant role in the prevention of certain types of cancer especially colon and breast cancer. Hypothesized biological mechanisms for the physical activity – preventative cancer association include changes in hormone level, reduced percentage of body fat, enhancement of the immune system, and alteration in free radical damage by

scavenger systems. Exercise has also been



shown to be effective in the rehabilitation process of the cancer victim. Please refer to the article below and the interview on page 2.

The fight against cancer rages on but the battle is being won. It is important to remember that a healthy lifestyle, (proper diet and regular exercise) and early detection (regular physical examinations) are the most effective weapons against this dreaded disease.

### DID YOU KNOW

#### What is cancer?

To understand what cancer is, it is helpful to understand the behaviour of a normal cell. A normal cell performs its designated job and divides only when the body signals that more cells are needed to carry out its function.

Cancer cells are abnormal cells that divide and multiply without appropriate control or regulation. The genetic material (DNA) of a cell can become damaged or changed, producing mutations that affect normal cell growth and division. When this happens, cells do not die when they should and new cells form when the body does not need them. These extra cells can form a mass of tissue or the tumor. Over 200 types of cancers identified have one characteristic in common: unchecked cell growth. They multiply and can invade other tissues or spread to other parts of the body.

Cancer is a genetic disease because it is driven by gene mutations. Gene mutations occur when the DNA of cells is not copied perfectly into new cells. Cancer cells are created when the genetic material (DNA) that causes the cell to be destroyed is mutated. Possible causes for genetic can be:

- Genetics. It is inherited from one or both parents.
- The result of every day environmental exposures and lifestyle factors.
- Exposure to specific cancer-causing substances like ultra-violet (UV) radiation from the sun, tobacco smoke or asbestos.
- The result of certain viral infections, like hepatitis, HIV or HPV.

Typically, multiple mutations are required for an abnormal cell to arise. To prevent cancer from occurring, the human body has many checks and balances aimed at discovering and destroying mutated cells. But, given certain circumstances, even the healthiest person can develop cancer.

### From the Canadian Cancer Society

#### Exercise can help you cope with side effects :



Canadian Cancer Society Société canadienne du cancer

Many doctors now encourage people with cancer to be as active as possible during treatment and recovery. Being active may:

- Reduce stress and improve your mood and help you sleep
- Boost your energy
- Stimulate your Appetite
- Reduce the side effects like nausea, fatigue and constipation
- Help you regain your strength during recovery

You will need to check with your doctor before starting any exercise program. After your doctor has given the okay, you might also meet with an exercise specialist with experience in this area. They can help you develop an exercise program that is safe, effective and fun for you.

**Cancer can be beaten:**  
**An insightful Interview with Maya Jonas, a cancer survivor, on how exercise played an important role in her recovery**



**What type of cancer did you have and how old were you when you were diagnosed?**

I was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 47.

**How did this diagnosis change your life?**

My breast cancer was so unexpected. It didn't really change my life but it encouraged me to do more of all of the positive things I was already doing. It reminds you that indeed you only have one life.

**Unfortunately, being diagnosed with cancer was not your first significant health challenge. You lost your eye sight at age 24 due to a condition called Retinitis Pigmentosa . You faced this physical disability by becoming increasingly physically active. How did the fact that you were more physically active and fit assist you in dealing with the stress of being diag-**

**nosed, and going through your treatment and rehabilitation for cancer?**

When I lost my eye sight, I wanted to make sure I could be the best blind person I could be. I did not want to be helpless and needy. Keeping fit and eating healthy has helped me adjust better physically and emotionally. It's hard to feel sorry for yourself when you can still wear a size 0 and running marathons at the age of 49 .

**What are you doing now to stay physically active?**

I really enjoy skiing both downhill and cross country, running, Pilates, light weights, tennis, sailing, rowing, climbing and I hope to take up blind fencing.

**For someone who has been recently diagnosed with cancer but has not been physically active in the past**

**would you recommend that they consider exercise as part of their physical and emotional rehabilitation?**

My high level of fitness has stood me in good stead while I was going through my recovery. I was able to run one week after my surgery. Due to my good overall condition, my recovery both in time and quality was remarkable. One of my oncologists told me that in all of his long career, he has never seen such excellent results.

**You are an inspiration to many people. You found strength in your challenge with blindness and fight with cancer. For those who are struggling with their physical and emotional battles what advice would you have for them?**

The only advice I have is to stay positive. Life is so precious and wonderful even with all the vicissitudes, we should enjoy and cherish every min-

ute! Your body will improve no matter what stage it's at if you put your mind to it. I ran my first marathon just one year after my surgery. I will be running the Toronto marathon in May so I can qualify for Boston next year when I'm 50. I was a couch potato 'till I was in my early 40's. It's never too late to start. I lost just about 40 pounds and kept it off for 8 years. I did it with no miracles, just exercise and healthy portion controlled eating. I was that cute pudgy kid who was always dead last in gym class. It's really all about how much do you want to be healthy. It's never too late!!!

**“Small Steps Leads to Big Differences”**

**April “Cancer Awareness Month ”Special**

**50% off Fitness and Health Assessment and 4 Exercise Sessions (\$250.00 savings)**

**Prevention is the key and this is a great way to step into spring and get fit**

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