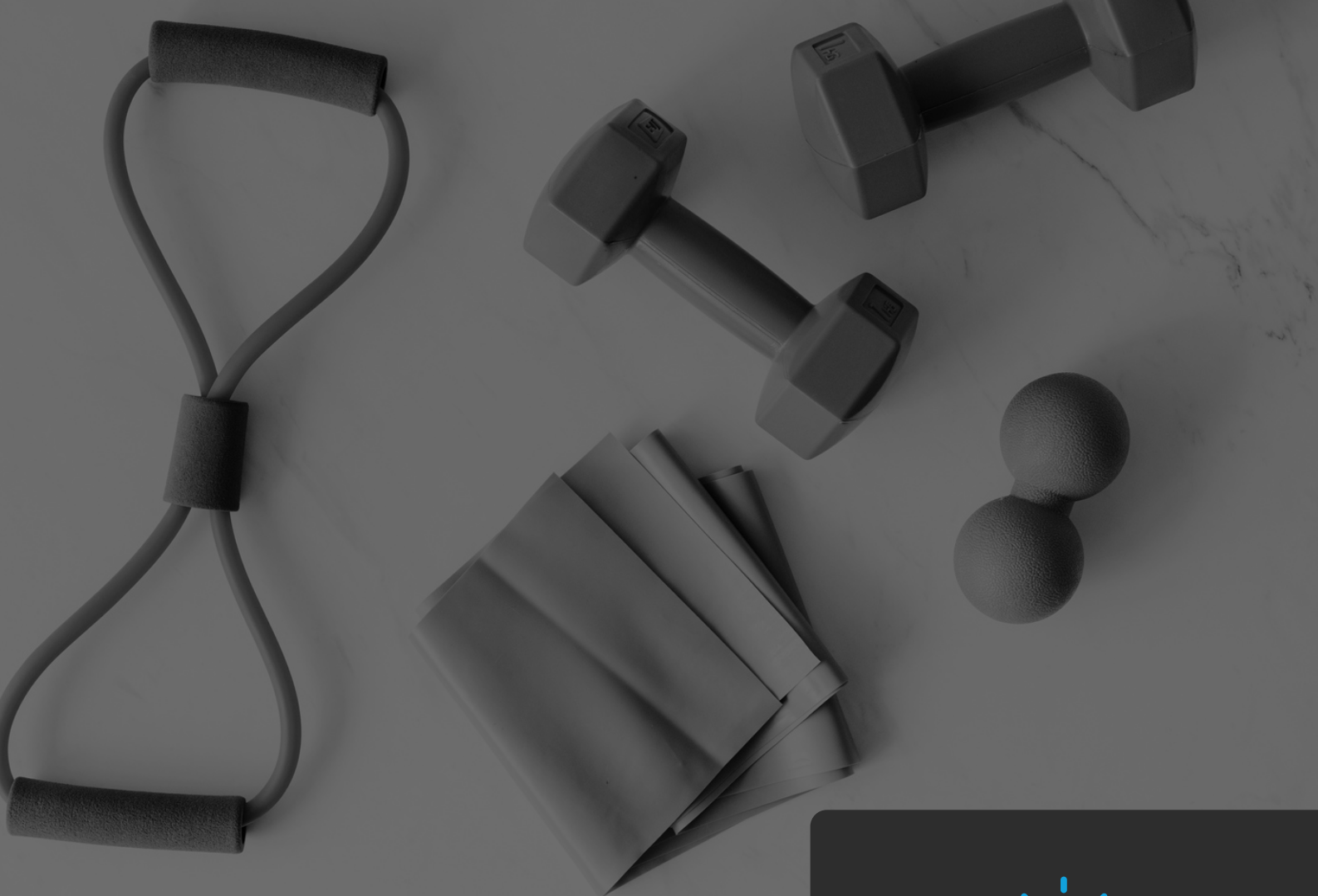




Bone Health During Cancer Recovery: What You Need to Know



Cancer treatment affects more than energy levels and fatigue, it can also weaken your bones. Treatments such as chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapy and corticosteroids can reduce bone density, making fractures more likely.

The good news? Bone is living tissue. With the right type of exercise, you can strengthen it, reduce your risk of falls and fractures and build confidence in your recovery.

This resource is designed to help you (and your support team) understand how cancer treatments affect bone health, and what steps you can take to protect yourself and stay strong.



How to Use This Resource

This resource is designed to be shared, discussed, and referred back to throughout the recovery journey. Use it to:

- **Build awareness of how cancer treatments can affect bone health and why that matters for recovery.**
- **Guide conversations about safe exercise and strategies to reduce fracture risk.**
- **Support decision-making around adding bone-strengthening activity into rehabilitation plans.**
- **Provide a simple reference point to revisit during appointments, reviews, or check-ins.**



Cancer, Treatment & Bone Health: The Chain Reaction

Cancer Treatments & Related Factors

Cancer treatments don't just fight cancer — they can also affect the body's ability to maintain strong bones. Alongside lifestyle changes during treatment, this creates the perfect storm for bone loss.

- Chemotherapy, radiation, hormone therapy, corticosteroids
- Inactivity and prolonged rest
- Early menopause or low testosterone
- Fatigue and reduced physical activity

How These Affect Bones

- When bones don't get the right signals or loading, they gradually become weaker. Over time, this leads to lower density and higher fragility.
- Lower bone mineral density (osteopenia or osteoporosis)
- Bones become weaker and more fragile
- Higher risk of fractures, even from small slips or falls

The Consequences

- Weakened bones can have a ripple effect on recovery. Fractures not only cause pain, but they also slow progress, reduce independence and can knock confidence.
- Fractures can delay recovery and independence
- Setbacks can reduce confidence and increase fatigue
- Progress slows, making everyday activities harder

How to Break the Cycle

- The good news is bones can respond positively to the right type of stress. With safe, progressive exercise and support, bone strength and confidence can be rebuilt.
- Safe, progressive exercise stimulates bone growth
- Resistance and balance training reduce fracture risk
- Education builds awareness and confidence
- Early support helps keep recovery on track



General Exercise Tips for Bone Health

Not all exercise is equal when it comes to bones. Here are some general principles that support bone strength:

- Weight-bearing activities such as walking, light jogging or stair climbing. These use your body weight to stimulate bone growth.
- Resistance training; using weights, resistance bands or bodyweight exercises (like squats, wall push-ups, or sit-to-stands). These load the bones and help build density.
- Balance & coordination; exercises like single-leg stands or heel-to-toe walking reduce fall risk, protecting against fractures.

⚠ Important: Not every exercise is safe for every person with cancer. Factors like fracture history, treatment type, fatigue levels and other health conditions matter. Always check with your treating team or an Exercise Physiologist before starting something new.

What You Can Do Next

- Talk to your treating team about whether a resistance-based exercise program is right for you.
- If you've had fractures before or you're worried about weak bones, make sure this is part of your rehab plan.
- Work with an Exercise Physiologist - they can design a safe, progressive program tailored to your treatment, recovery stage and personal goals.
- Remember: Building bone strength isn't just about avoiding fractures. It's about confidence, independence and moving forward in your recovery.
- Stronger bones = safer recovery.