



*Welcome to*

**Active  
Together.**

Helping you prepare for your cancer treatment

Registered charity number: 516898 (England and Wales)

Funded by

**Yorkshire Cancer  
Research**



## *What is Active Together?*

**Active Together is a cancer prehabilitation and rehabilitation service which helps people prepare for their cancer treatment and recover from it afterwards. This includes support with physical activity and exercise, healthy eating and mental wellbeing.**

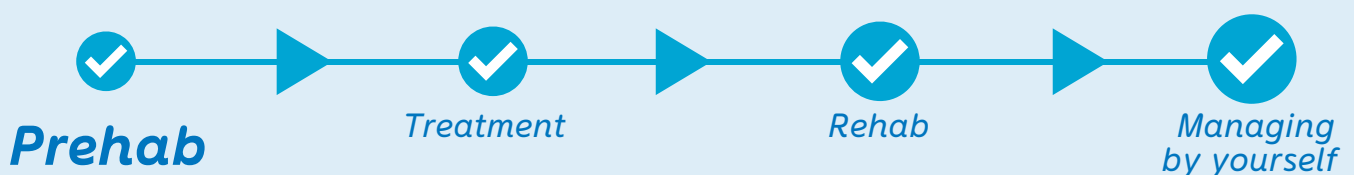
It's hard getting a cancer diagnosis. You might feel uncertain about what to do. You might feel overwhelmed by the different information you have been given. This booklet has some simple advice to help you prepare for your treatment.

## *How does it work?*

**Research shows that working towards good mental wellbeing, regular exercise and a healthy diet before, during and after cancer treatment can help in many ways, including:**

- Being able to tolerate cancer treatment better
- Having fewer complications from surgery
- Feeling less tired and having a better mood
- Being able to do more for yourself
- Spending fewer days in hospital
- Having less chance of your cancer coming back.

### *Developing a plan together*



## How are you feeling?

Looking after your mind as well as your body is important during this time. It is normal to feel a range of emotions in reaction to uncertain situations.

Some people might not feel much at all, while others can have strong feelings of shock, worry, upset or frustration. These feelings can rise and fall. You may find these feelings show in various ways, such as:

- Tightness in your chest
- Feeling your heart thumping
- Not thinking straight
- Feeling upset or tearful
- Being self-critical
- Feeling sick
- Being short with friends or family

## How can you manage your mental wellbeing?

These steps can be useful in reducing feelings of stress or worry. **K.I.N.D.** stands for:

### **K: Be kind to yourself**

Be kind to yourself and reflect on what you're feeling. Some people find writing their feelings down helpful.

### **I: Identify your coping strategies**

Think about ways you have coped in a previous difficult situation. Set aside some time for yourself to do things that make you feel good, even if it's just 10 minutes.

### **N: Say no**

Protect your energy and use your time for the important parts of your life. This means setting boundaries and saying no to others to sometimes put yourself first.

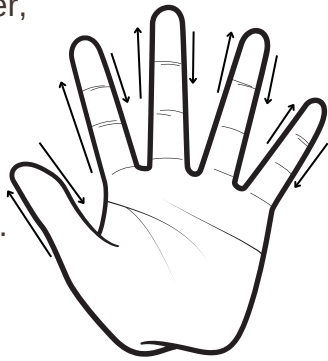
### **D: Discuss with others**

Talk to someone you feel comfortable talking to about how you are feeling.

## Exercises to help you relax

### 5 finger breathing

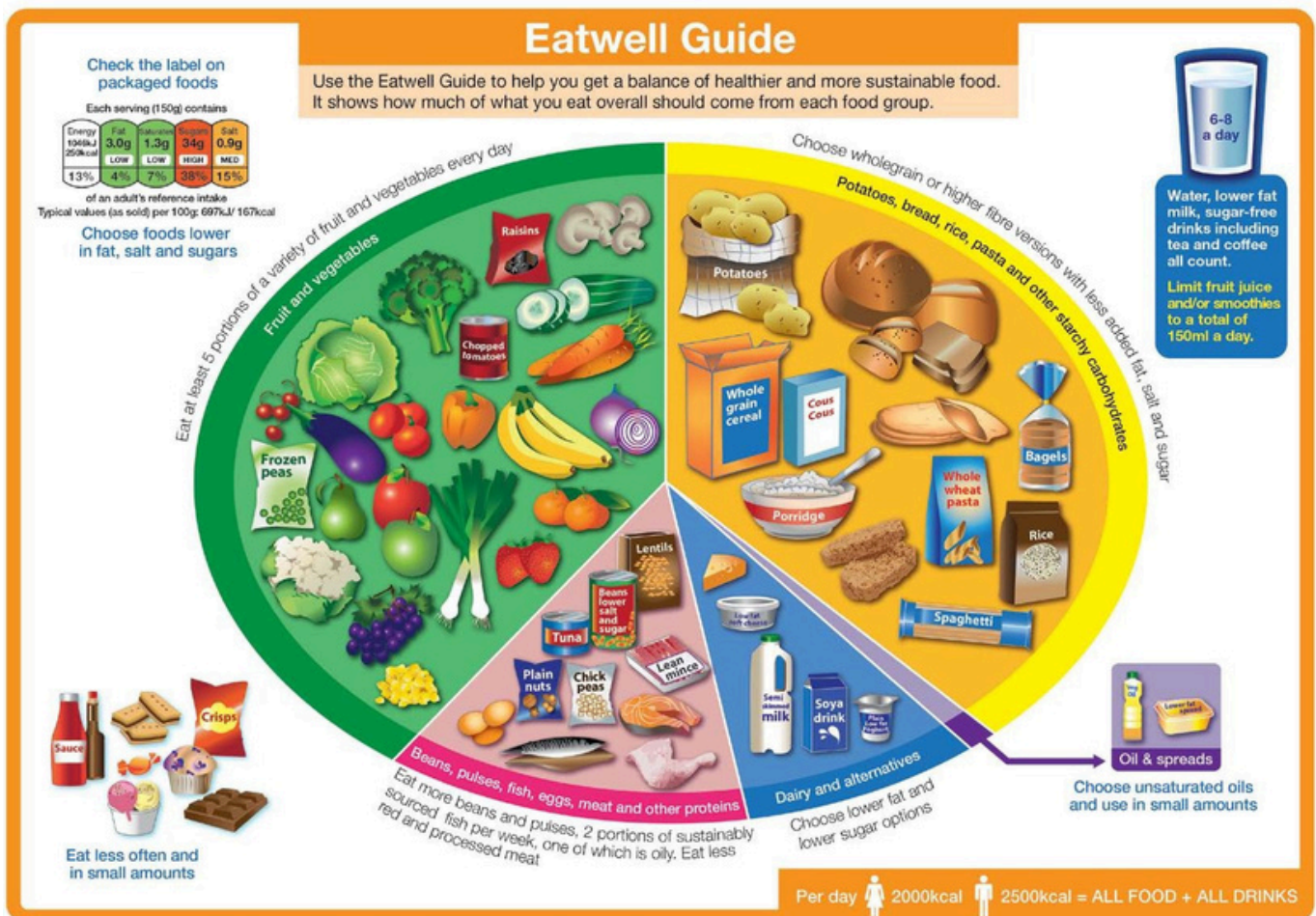
Stretch out your hand like a star. Get another finger ready to trace your fingers up and down. Breathe in as you slide up each finger, pause at the top, then slide your finger down the other side and breathe out slowly. Do this for each finger.



### 54321 exercise

This exercise aims to bring you back to the present when anxious thoughts get overwhelming. All that is needed is to notice what is around you with each of the five senses. Notice...

- Five things you can see
- Four things you can feel
- Three things you can hear
- Two things you can smell
- One thing you can taste.



## How can a healthy diet help?

Following a healthy, balanced diet can make you feel better in lots of ways such as:

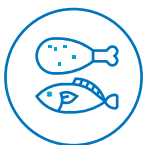
- Helping you feel stronger
- Helping with the side effects of cancer treatment
- Improving your recovery
- Reducing the time you spend in hospital.

### Staying hydrated

Becoming dehydrated can affect you physically and mentally and can cause dizziness, brain fog and fatigue. You should aim to drink 6 to 8 glasses of water per day. Try to choose fluids that are sugar free. Limit your alcohol. Aim to drink no more than 14 units per week.

## Focus on *protein*

Protein is key to muscle growth and repair and is vital as you prepare for your cancer treatment.



- Examples: meat, fish, soya, beans, pulses, tofu or eggs.
- Portion: A portion is the size of your palm.
- Eat a portion of protein with each meal and at least two portions of fish each week, one of which should be oily such as salmon, mackerel and sardines.



**Tip:** Eating a high protein meal or snack after physical activity can help the body repair and recover giving you more energy to get the most out of being active.



## The other elements of a healthy diet

As well as protein, you should also try to eat a balanced diet including carbohydrates, fruits, vegetables, and dairy.



### Carbohydrates

- Examples: bread, potatoes, rice, or pasta.
- A portion is the size of one clenched fist.
- Include carbohydrates in each meal. These are the body's main source of energy.
- A high carbohydrate snack 90 minutes before exercise will give you energy to get the most out of being active.

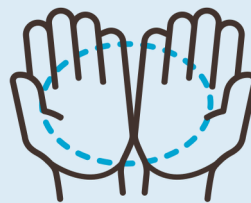


### Fruits and vegetables

- A portion of fruit is one clenched fist. A portion of vegetables is two handfuls.



*Fruit*



*Vegetables*

- Eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables each day.
- Fresh, frozen, canned and dried fruit and vegetables all count.



### Dairy

- Examples: milk, yoghurt, and cheese.
- Include two to three portions of dairy or dairy alternatives each day.
- Choose low fat or low sugar options where possible.



### Foods high in fat and/or sugar

- Try and eat less food that is high in fat and/or sugar, such as cakes, sweets, crisps, butter, and soft drinks. These foods are high in calories and lower in protein, vitamins, and minerals.

## *What are the benefits of being physically active?*

**There are lots of benefits to being physically active after a cancer diagnosis including:**

- Improving the strength and efficiency of the heart and lungs
- Helping to reduce the side effects from treatment
- Helping you to perform everyday activities with ease
- Reducing fatigue or tiredness
- Helping you recover from cancer
- Improving quality of life and mental wellbeing.

## *How much physical activity should I do?*

**The advice is to work up to 150 minutes of moderate physical activity per week.**

**Tip:** Moderate intensity physical activity is when you feel a little bit out of breath, but you can still hold a conversation. It is the yellow zone on the effort scale.

**If you feel ready to progress, you can then work towards 75 minutes of vigorous intensity exercise per week. Vigorous intensity is when it becomes challenging to talk due to fast breathing.**

## *How do I get more active?*

### *Build it up:*

Build up your physical activity gradually over time. Add a little more each week.

### *Break it up:*

Break your activity into small chunks - maybe 10 minutes at a time. Every little counts.

### *Find something you enjoy:*

You are more likely to continue if it's something you like doing. Perhaps try listening to music while you exercise.

### *Work it into your routine:*

Try parking further away from the house or shops, or taking the stairs more often.

### *Ask friends or family to join you:*

See if friends or family want to join you - this can help keep you motivated and on track.

### *Make a plan:*

Use the activity diary to plan out what you're going to do.





# Physical activity

Any physical activity can help you prepare for cancer treatment, however everyone is different. What is tiring for one person may not be for others. Below, begin to think about the physical activity you already do, how hard you are working and for how long, and where you could make changes to increase your exercise.

Effort		Activity	Time
20	Maximal effort		
19	Very Very Hard		
18			
17	Very Hard		
16			
15	Hard		
14			
13	Somewhat Hard		
12			
11	Fairly Light		
10			
9	Very Light		
8			
7	Very Very Light		
6	No effort at all (rest)		

## *Where can you start?*

**Sometimes taking the first step to change your lifestyle can feel daunting, so it is important that you take a small step at a time.**

Begin by asking yourself the following questions:

- What can you do more of?

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- What can you do less of?

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- Who could support you and how?

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- What would help you make these changes?

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- When will you take your first step?

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- What barriers might you face and how will you overcome these?

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# Action plan

Notes	
Date	
Person	
Action	

## What next?

The team will continue to support you as you prepare for your treatment. We will talk to you again before you start your treatment and discuss ways you can stay well during this time.

After your treatment, we will meet with you and re-assess you to see how you are. We will work with you to make a new plan to help you to get back to doing the things that matter to you, and support you over the next few months to meet those goals.

In partnership with

**Sheffield  
Hallam  
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Find out more online, visit:  
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