



# Simcoe Muskoka Regional Cancer Program Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC) Newsletter

The Fall 2022 Edition

*This edition of the PFAC newsletter is all about the benefits of movement. It may be a less intimidating term than exercise, but (shhhh) really it's all about exercise. If you are anything like me, I was so hesitant to start. I just didn't know what I was capable of doing. I went to step class, held in my friend's basement. There, my friends encouraged me to just move to just do what I could do on any given day. I ALWAYS left feeling so much better.*

*- Stacey LePage, PFAC patient member*



There are so many ways to add exercise into your everyday life without causing you too much pain or angst. Most of us know that it's good for us (sort of like eating your vegetables), but we often put it off, which makes exercise harder to do than it ought to be. So, think about exercise as movement and maybe you'll be more likely to begin because there are so many benefits!

Exercise that raises your heart rate will:

- give you more energy (seriously)
- help you sleep better
- make your mood better (and we all know the games cancer and its treatments can play with our mood)
- make muscles strong
- lower cholesterol levels
- lower the risk of heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, osteoporosis, anxiety and depression

Adapted from article [Exercise and cancer](#) written by Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre.



Image by Mabel Amber from Pixabay.

**Read on to find out how you can reap the benefits of movement!**

For more information about the Cancer Program's Patient and Family Advisory Council, visit [www.rvh.on.ca](http://www.rvh.on.ca) and type "cancer pfac" in the search bar.

# What's New in Simcoe Muskoka?

## Group Exercise Programs for Cancer Patients



Image by Mabel Amber for Pixabay.

Sure, you can do fitness on your own, but why not invite someone along to exercise with you? Studies have shown that having an exercise partner can keep you motivated and exercise more. At the very least, you have someone to share that end of workout snack with! Don't have an exercise buddy near you? There are group exercise programs that are designed for cancer patients. Some are even online, perfect for those days that you want to stay at home. COVID-19 has created more options for online group exercise programs than ever before. Check out these

great group exercise programs for cancer patients below. Always contact the program organizers first to ensure the program is running and gather the most up-to-date information.

While exercise brings many benefits, it's a good idea to speak with your family doctor or cancer health care team if you are not sure if these programs are safe for you.

## What group exercise programs are available for cancer patients?

### **EXCEL: Exercise for Cancer to Enhance Living Well** (online, FREE)

EXCEL is a Canada-wide research study that offers FREE, 12-week exercise classes designed specifically for people undergoing or recovering from cancer treatment. Classes are online through a secure video-conferencing platform, and where possible, in-person. An IN-PERSON Huntsville EXCEL session will start as soon as we have enough participants register.

For more information, please contact Daniel Sibley ([Daniel.sibley@mail.utoronto.ca](mailto:Daniel.sibley@mail.utoronto.ca)), or visit <https://kinesiology.ucalgary.ca/labs/health-and-wellness/research/research-studies/exercise-cancer-enhance-living-well-excel>.



### **YMCA iCan exercise program** (In-person, various locations in Simcoe Muskoka)

Fee: monthly membership at YMCA. For more information: [ryan.purdy@sm.ymca.ca](mailto:ryan.purdy@sm.ymca.ca). <https://ymcaofsimcoemuskoka.ca/ican/>



### **ActiveMatch** (online, FREE, for women only)

ActiveMatch is a free online service helping individuals to find an exercise partner or small group. The purpose of this service is to help women who have been diagnosed with cancer connect with similar women who are looking for support and guidance to help start, continue, or change their exercise routines. <https://activematch.ca/>



**Your local cancer support groups** may also offer group exercise programs in both online and in-person formats including:

ENLIVEN (Huntsville area) [https://enlivenmuskoka.ca/?page\\_id=19](https://enlivenmuskoka.ca/?page_id=19)

Gilda's Club Simcoe Muskoka (Barrie area) <https://gildasclubsimcoemuskoka.org/>

Georgian Bay Cancer Support Group (Midland area) <https://gbcancersupportcentre.ca/>

## Meet an Expert: Deanna Lavigne, Community Kinesiologist



Deanna is a community kinesiologist and exercise specialist. She is an experienced kinesiologist with over 25 years of experience helping people to regain function, to age well, to prevent chronic illness and meet their physical goals for a better quality of life. Deanna is a big believer in the power exercise has to improve one's health. The PFAC group asked her some tough questions that we felt all of us would have asked at some point on our cancer journey. She was happy to answer all our questions.

**Most of us know that exercise is good for us. In your practice, what do you see are the barriers for cancer patients in getting more physical activity?**



"When I work with cancer patients in my practice, I hear about the many challenges they endure/face such as the physical exhaustion of living with cancer, the treatments, the appointments, the stress. On top of this, the non-cancer parts of your life are still there. Your role as a caregiver, a spouse, a partner, an employee, a student, a friend is still there. Sometimes cancer treatments can leave people with side effects that make it challenging for people to exercise. Some people are afraid of exercising as they don't want to get hurt or get sick from exercising with others.

The good news is that exercise can help you face these challenges. There are many ways to adjust the exercise to "meet you where you're at". Some people think exercise is running for miles or working with heavy weights at a gym. Exercise can be those things but can also be as simple as sitting in a chair and lifting a bottle of water or walking to the end of your driveway and back. It does not have to be "all or nothing".

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*"You don't have to be fit to start exercising."*

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**We love the idea of "meeting people where they're at"! Tell us more about the options that are available to cancer patients.**

"For those who are super busy: take an exercise snack. If you can take a tea break for 5 minutes, you can take an exercise break. Read more about the idea of exercise snacking here:

<https://www.deannalavignekinesiology.ca/blog/exercisesnacks>



For those who are too tired: start small and build up. You'll be amazed how much more energized you feel after a 5-minute walk, or an exercise snack.

For those who just can't seem to get started, try finding an exercise buddy. If you don't have a friend or family member, check out the list of group exercise programs in this newsletter.

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*“I like that I can meet other like-minded folks: other cancer patients who are interested in exercising.”*

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For those who are concerned about getting injured, most of the group exercise programs listed in this newsletter include a physical assessment. The physical assessment allows the trainer to find out more about your health, your current strength, endurance, flexibility, and range of motion. By checking these stats, your trainer can work with you to figure out where to start and where to go from here. Depending on your health situation, your trainer may suggest you speak to your family doctor or oncologist before starting to exercise.



For those who don't want to exercise in a gym or with others, virtual group exercise programs are a great way to find like-minded people and exercise together while staying safe.”

**You are a trainer for the EXCEL program. Tell us more about the EXCEL program.**

"The program is a great way for cancer patients to exercise safely at no cost. I work with every patient to tailor the exercise that will be safe for you. As this program is a research study, there is a bit of paperwork to review at the beginning. It may include fitness assessments and surveys before and after the program. Don't worry there is no studying needed for the tests!



For the virtual sessions, you'll need a computer or a tablet with a camera and internet connection.

As for fitness equipment, all you need is some space in front of your computer, about the size of a king-sized bed. We can incorporate some household items such as a soup can, a bottle of water, a sturdy chair. An elastic band is a very inexpensive exercise tool, easy to buy online, and takes up no space at all. There is no need to rush out to buy exercise equipment.

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*“I like the fact that EXCEL is a study. I feel that I can contribute in a positive way.”*

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At each session there may be 5-10 people exercising with you at the same time. As the trainer I can see everyone at the same time to make sure you are safe. We take down everyone's emergency contact, so in the event you do not feel well, we can reach out to your emergency contact right away.



Some feedback I've heard from participants include:

"Some of these programs have multiple sessions throughout the day which helps me to find one that works for my schedule."

"I love the variety of exercises they introduce into the sessions. I would have never thought to use soup cans, water bottles and an elastic band for exercise! The programs helped me learn about different aspects of exercise, such as strength, coordination, and balance. I was getting tired of walking around the block, so this was great."

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*"I feel more alive after every session!"*

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I really love being part of EXCEL as a trainer. It's so gratifying to see how life changing this exercise program is for cancer patients. Exercise works, it IS worth the effort!

***Dance! "When listening to music, we listen with our muscles." -Oliver Sacks***

***"If you can't fly, run. If you can't run, walk. If you can't walk, crawl. But by all means, keep moving." -Martin Luther King Jr***

## Still Looking for Suggestions?

**Do you like gardening?** Gardening can be an effective way to build strength throughout your body. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6334070/>

### How do you feel about music?

Music can get you moving faster during those tough workouts. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-exercise-workout-music-playlist\\_n\\_4173931](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/why-exercise-workout-music-playlist_n_4173931)



**Do you like sleeping?** The average person burns 50 calories every hour while they sleep! <https://www.sleepfoundation.org/how-sleep-works/how-your-body-uses-calories-while-you-sleep>

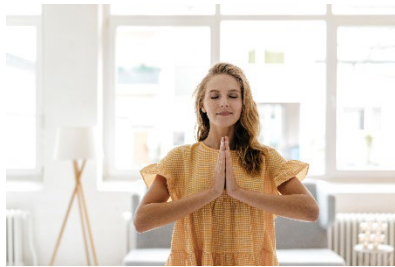
Regular physical exercise can help you sleep better. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/fitness/in-depth/exercise/art-20048389?pg=2>

Even just a short bout of exercise can drastically improve your sex life! <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5963213/>

Laughing 100 times is equal to 15 minutes on an exercise bike. <https://news.sanfordhealth.org/healthy-living/easing-stress-with-laughter/>



## A Few Words of Inspiration



“You don’t always need a plan. Sometimes you just need to breathe, trust, let go and see what happens.” - **Mandy Hale**

“What lies behind you and what lies in front of you, pales in comparison to what lies inside of you.” - **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

“We must let go of the life we have planned, so as to accept the one that is waiting for us.”  
- **Joseph Campbell**

## Cancer Program Updates: You Ask, We Answer!

Written by Susanna Wong, PFAC staff member

**Question: Why am I getting emails to complete symptom screening before my appointment?**

**Let’s start by answering the question: what is symptom screening?**

Symptom screening is a tool used to tell your healthcare team if you are having any symptoms related to your cancer. It is different from the COVID-19 screening questions.

Here’s an example of one of the questions:

Ontario Health | Your Symptoms Matter

Your Symptoms Matter - General Symptoms

Pain

Please select the number that best describes how you feel **NOW**.

😊 No Pain | Worst Possible Pain 😞

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Completing your symptom screening can help you and your Care Team to:

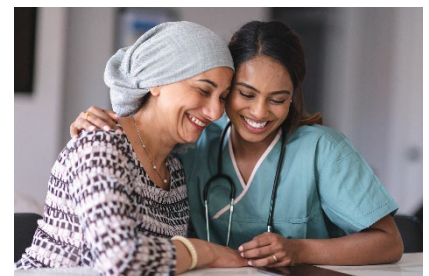
- notice and treat any symptoms you may be having
- talk about the symptoms that matter to you
- track your symptoms over time to see how they have changed and find ways to manage them

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*“I find symptom screening a useful tool to guide conversations about my symptoms. At my last visit, I was so pleased that my nurse reviewed my symptom screening scores with me. I felt listened to and heard. I felt that I was a part of the Team.”*

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It is part of your care and part of how we can best help you with your cancer-related symptoms. We ask you to complete your symptom screening before every appointment with a doctor or a nurse at the Cancer Centre. This includes the new patient, follow-up, pre-chemo, and radiation review appointments. For more information, please visit [www.rvh.on.ca](http://www.rvh.on.ca) and type “symptom screening” in the search bar.



## For the second question: why am I getting emails from the Cancer Program?

The Cancer Program sends emails to patients at certain time points in your cancer journey. To help you prepare for your upcoming appointment, we send an email to cancer patients 3 days before an upcoming appointment as an invitation to complete symptom screening at home.

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*"I like the email reminder to do my symptom screening at home. I don't have to rush when I answer the questions. I can ask my family members to help me complete it using my computer."*

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*"I prefer doing symptom screening before I come into the hospital for my appointment. One less thing to worry about when I'm there!"*

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For those who are having difficulties completing your symptom screening at home, you can always do your symptom screening in-person at the hospital. RVH, our main OTN partners and satellite chemotherapy clinics have the tools and the people to help you complete it.

If you have questions, thoughts and ideas on how we can improve the process, we would love to hear about it! Please email us at [nsmsscreeing@rvh.on.ca](mailto:nsmsscreeing@rvh.on.ca). You can also request to unsubscribe from Cancer Program emails by sending your request to the same email. To protect your health information, please only include your name and phone number. We will follow up with you via phone.

## A Little Bit of Humour. Don't judge us. You know they are funny!



**"If you haven't exercised in a while, you may need to stretch and warm up before you stretch and warm up."**



**"Explain it to me one more time. Why do you need \$200 walking shoes, but I have to do 5 miles in bare feet?"**

## Falling for the Taste of Fall

### Delicious Lentil Dip

by Taude Plexman, PFAC member

I used to crave dips when I was in treatment, but knew they weren't all that great for me. This one, however, left me feeling very healthy and guilt-free! Hope you enjoy!

#### Dip Ingredients

- 1 can lentils, drained
- 1 pepper (red, orange, or yellow – take your pick, or combine if making a double batch)
- 1 cup of chopped raisins, dried cranberries, or dried currants
- 2 green onions, chopped

Please all dip ingredients in a large bowl. Whisk and pour sauce (see ingredients below) over the dip. Stir to mix. Immediately tastes delicious, but even better after marinating overnight.

#### Sauce

- 1/3 cup olive oil
- 1/4 cup red wine vinegar
- 1 tbsp Dijon mustard
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/2 tsp curry
- 1 minced garlic clove (more if you're a garlic lover!)
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp maple syrup



## Canadian Cancer Society Wheels of Hope program is looking for volunteer drivers!

For more information:  
<http://cancervolunteer.ca/>

### Become a Volunteer Driver Today!

Did you know that the simple act of driving your car can help cancer patients? Help people with cancer in your community get to and from treatment.

Find the volunteer opportunities in your area.

Register now at [cancervolunteer.ca](http://cancervolunteer.ca)  
or call 1-888-939-3333.



**WHEELS  
OF HOPE**