

Walking better than chemotherapy

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A new study shows that walking dramatically improves outcomes in colon cancer. In fact, walking was a better treatment than chemotherapy.

So... get a dog and put on your walking shoes!

Walking Improves Outcomes

The second study^[2] is "ready for prime time" and applicable in your clinic if you are not doing it already. In this study, published in the *Journal of Clinical Oncology* in January, investigators identified 2300 people [with invasive, nonmetastatic colorectal cancer] and measured how much exercise they got before and after their diagnosis. This is fascinating data, showing that those people who were more physically active both before and after their diagnosis of colon cancer had much better outcomes.

These patients needed only a minimum 8.75 MET (metabolic equivalent) hours of recreational exercise per week, or the equivalent of 150 minutes a week of physical activity -- basically, walking. So, I often prescribe a dog for patients because they will have to walk their dog. Insurance won't cover that, by the way. We have tried.

If you engage in that much physical activity before and after [a colon cancer diagnosis] the risk reduction [in all-cause mortality] is 0.58. That is better than any chemotherapy we have ever given to anyone. Physical activity after diagnosis, and certainly pre- and post-, is better, but even if you just pick it up afterwards, you will have a significant improvement in outcome. If you are a couch potato and do not exercise, your risk goes the other way, to risk escalation, with a 1.36 hazard ratio [for all-cause mortality].