



Living through cancer with exercise

Sunflower Wellness empowers people living with cancer to find strength and support through exercise.

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May 2014

Betty Smoot: Fighting cancer-related lymphedema with exercise

“While treatments for cancer have improved significantly, physical consequences of treatment persist,” says Betty Smoot. “Pain, lymphedema, neuropathy, and reductions in strength and range of motion can have a dramatic impact on function and quality of life. Fortunately, these problems are often amenable to rehabilitation and exercise interventions.”



Dr. Smoot is an Assistant Professor at UCSF with appointments in the Department of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science and the Department of Anatomy. She is also a licensed physical therapist with

certifications in lymphedema therapy and in exercise training for people with cancer.

Lymphedema is most commonly caused by the removal of or damage to lymph nodes as a part of cancer treatment. When lymph fluid can't drain properly, typically from arms or legs, it can create extensive, painful swelling.

Betty's clinical and research interests include the assessment and treatment of physical impairments related to cancer treatment, with a strong interest in lymphedema. She co-teaches community lymphedema education classes, and Strength After Breast Cancer (SABC), an exercise class for women with or at risk for lymphedema after

breast cancer treatment. Initiated by Sunflower Wellness Medical Advisory Board member Katie Schmitz, the SABC program is taught at the UCSF Health and Wellness Center at the Mission Bay Campus. Betty also volunteers at Charlotte Maxwell Complimentary Clinic, serving low-income women with cancer, seeing clients with lymphedema.

Betty's research encompasses two related areas: the effects of breast cancer treatment on physical function, and the clinical diagnosis of and predictors for development of cancer-related lymphedema. Recognizing Betty's dedication in these important areas, we recently appointed her to serve on our Medical Advisory Board.

Exercise is an increasingly important component in oncology rehabilitation programs. Betty points out that an oncology fitness and wellness program, such as what Sunflower Wellness offers, bridges the gap between patients receiving solid medical care and regular physical activity. But, she says, “there are precautions to exercise and varying degrees of risk associated with exercise during and after cancer treatment. It's important to be evaluated for these risks by rehabilitation or fitness professionals who are specifically trained in exercise for cancer survivors.” *(Article continues on next page)*

Also in this issue:

- *Lymphedema tips*
- *Research: Cancer-related lymphedema and exercise*
- *Exercise of the month: Shoulder flexibility: “I-Y-T-W”*

Now you can



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Betty began collaborating in 2008 with Sunflower's Regan Fedric and Jane Clark, through the UCSF Mount Zion Cancer Resource Center. They co-developed "Moving Through Cancer," an exercise education booklet for cancer survivors, completed in 2010. They're at work again on another set of exercise booklets specifically targeting exercise during treatment of and recovery from breast cancer and prostate cancer.

Lymphedema Tips

By Kim Kouri

If you've dealt with lymph node removal, then you understand the risk of lymphedema. You might be dealing with it now – and like those of us who've confronted this issue and are looking for solutions, you may be asking yourself: "Exercise or not? Weights or no weights? Heavy or light?"

You likely didn't get a guidebook when you finished treatment that spelled out the down and dirty on upper body lymphedema: When can you get it? How do you know if it happens? What can you do to get rid of it?

I was at risk because of the number of lymph nodes removed during my surgery: twelve in total, six with cancer—AND I had radiation, a double whammy! This put me in the high-risk group: I was given marching orders post-surgery to prevent the development of lymphedema, a fairly overwhelming task. My resulting strategies came from my own experiences, conversations with my oncologist and with Regan at Sunflower, and through my own online research.

The Basics –how to avoid lymphedema in the first place:

- Avoid infections by wearing gloves when gardening and be careful when cooking—you don't want burns or cuts.
- No blood draws, blood pressure checks or even massages in the arm that is prone to it.
- Keep your skin moisturized with lots of lotion.
- Eat healthy and maintain a healthy weight.

And now for some helpful tips:

Tip #1 –Pay attention: Know what your body looks and feels like. If your arm starts to feel different, don't ignore it: deal with lymphedema as soon as you notice swelling.

Tip #2 – **Exercise!** Regaining range of motion should begin soon after you've healed from surgery. Sure, in the beginning, it can be tough to get in the groove. Everything feels tight and just reaching up over your head can be difficult. It gets better. Try doing the I-Y-T-W exercises included below (on page 4) daily and remember to be gentle with yourself! I found them to really help.

Tip #3 – Swim or attend an aqua class. Water is perfect for total body compression! For some women, getting into a suit can be difficult due to decreased range of motion. Some might not want to change at the gym. Some of our aqua class participants come in their suits with big robes to put on after class. No changing at the gym!

Tip #4 – A great East Coast organization called LymphedIVAs makes fashionable compression sleeves. Check them out at

www.lymphedivas.com. They strongly urge users to exercise:

"Those suffering from breast cancer-related lymphedema (BCRL) should remain active by engaging in an exercise program."

"Patients with BCRL were previously advised to avoid resistance to their affected arm. Due to recent research, we now know that proper exercise can be beneficial vs. harmful if performed correctly. As a rule, compression in the form of garments or short stretch bandages should always be worn during resistive exercise. An exercise prescription should be obtained by the treating lymphedema therapist in order to provide a safe and beneficial program."

Sunflower Wellness would love to hear from you about how you've dealt with this issue. I see my cancer journey as a collaborative process and some of the best tricks of the trade come from others going through it too. Let's share! And don't forget Tip #2 – **EXERCISE !**



Research Update:

Cancer-Related Lymphedema and Exercise

By Trisha Hue

Lymphedema results from fluid build-up in soft body tissues and usually causes swelling of an arm or leg, but it can also affect other parts of the body.¹ This chronic condition most commonly occurs in 6 to 66% of patients who receive surgery and/or radiation therapy for cancers of the breast, uterus, vulva, cervix, prostate, and melanoma.²⁻¹⁰ Guidelines recommend tailored exercise programs combining flexibility, resistance and aerobic exercise,¹¹ but there is little evidence at this time on the therapeutic effect of exercise in managing cancer-related lymphedema.¹² The research to date is encouraging, though. One study found that uterine cancer survivors with higher levels of physical activity or walking had a lower rate of lower limb lymphedema¹³ and a recent trial also found a significant improvement in excessive limb volume in breast cancer patients randomized to a 6-month exercise program with standard lymphedema treatment compared to those with standard treatment alone.¹²

It was previously speculated that resistance exercise may exacerbate lymphedema and some advised that this type of exercise be avoided,¹⁴ but that notion has been dispelled. A randomized controlled trial demonstrated that slowly progressive weight lifting in breast-cancer survivors with lymphedema had no significant effect on limb swelling and after a year of weight-lifting, the women had increased strength and reductions in the severity of their symptoms.¹⁵ In a separate trial, researchers also found that weight lifting did not increase the risk of new

lymphedema diagnoses in breast cancer survivors.¹⁶

References: ¹Lymphedema. National Cancer Institute. <http://www.cancer.gov/cancertopics/pdq/supportivecare/lymphedema/Patient/page1>. Accessed May 2, 2014.; ²Chatani M, et al. *Strahlenther Onkol*. 1998;174:504-509.; ³Gerdin E, et al. *Acta Obstet Gynecol Scand*. 1995; 74:554-561.; ⁴Hong JH, et al. *Int J Radiat Oncol Biol Phys*. 2002;53: 1284-1290.; ⁵Numms D, et al. *Int J Gynecol Cancer*. 2000;10:233-238.; ⁶Petereit DG, et al. *Am J Clin Oncol*. 1993;16:38-42.; ⁷van Doorn HC, et al. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2006;3:CD003752.; ⁸Pilepich MV, et al. *Prostate*. 1984;5:471-476.; ⁹Wrone DA, et al. *Arch Dermatol*. 2000;136:511-514.; ¹⁰Starritt EC, et al. *Ann Surg*. 2004; 240:866-874.; ¹¹Sable M, et al. *Surgery*. 2007;141:728-735.; ¹²Framework L. 2006 MEP, London.; ¹³Brown JC, et al. *Med Sci Sports Exerc*. 2013;45(11):2091-7.; ¹⁴Jeffs E, Wiseman T. *Support Care Cancer* 2013; 21:1013-1023.; ¹⁵Lawenda BD, et al. *CA Cancer J Clin* 2009;59:8-24.; ¹⁶Markes M, et al. *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*. 2006;(4):CD005001; ¹⁵Schmitz KH, et al. *NEJM* 2009; 361:664-673.; ¹⁶Schmitz KH, et al. *JAMA*. 2010;304(24):2699-2705.

Sunflower Wellness, by the Numbers

UCSF Exercise Consultation stats

- As of April 2010: over 760 patient consults
- Patients who report they now exercise: 78.1%
- Average STRESS impact: 26.8% reduction
- Average FATIGUE impact: 27.4% reduction

Stanford Exercise Consultation Stats

- As of January 2013: over 85 patient consults

Marin General Exercise Consultation Stats

- As of January 2014: over 120 patient consults

Sunflower Exercise Program Stats

- Weekly exercise classes currently offered: 20
- Total clients served since July 2009: 482
- Class sessions logged: 2,318
- Personal training sessions: 581
- Total client- hours of exercise: Over 11,600

Join us June 29 at Harbor Point in Mill Valley – a benefit for Sunflower Wellness!

Sunflower Wellness salutes the Harbor Point Charitable Foundation for honoring us with a benefit dinner. Please join us for a fun evening, featuring The Cole Tate Band, a raffle

and silent auction (anyone up for dinner at Restaurant Gary Danko?)



Sunday, June 29
4 – 8 pm
dinner + raffle + silent auction

BUY NOW \$75

Where:
The Club at Harbor Point,
Mill Valley
475 E. Strawberry Dr.

www.ToYourHealthBayArea.org
415.383.6114

www.sunflowerwellness.org

Exercise of the Month: Shoulder Range of Motion: "I-Y-T-W"



Start "I" "Y" "T" "W"

The "I-Y-T-W" uses four patterns of movement to enhance range of motion in the shoulder joint. Exercise on both sides, **one side at a time**, which will help to enhance shoulder function, improve posture, and will help with movement rehabilitation. These exercises should be performed carefully, slowly, and with control of the movement. They can be performed every day.

The start position: Stand in a staggered stance, with the opposite foot forward of the moving arm – left foot forward if you are moving your right arm, right foot forward if you are moving your left arm.

To start, tap the left knee and then lift the right arm into each position as far as you can – without causing pain! Then lower your arm again and tap your knee. Repeat each exercise position five to ten times with each arm, then move to the next position in the sequence. Complete the I-Y-T-W sequence then change your leg position to run through the sequence again with the other side of your body. Exhale when you move your arm upward, and inhale as you lower your arm to tap your knee. Using your breath can help to enhance and increase your range of motion.

Welcome, Kris Morrison!

Here's a glimpse of the newest member of the Sunflower Wellness staff. Kris has been working with our organization as a Board member for the past three years. He is a world traveler and truly a gentle soul. Kris usually sports a smile, which, along with his formidable skills makes him perfect for serving as our Outreach Coordinator. Kris is smart as a whip - most recently working as a Senior Investment Associate with RBC Wealth Management in San Francisco, focusing exclusively on socially responsible investing—of over \$1 billion in assets.



Kris holds a Bachelors degree from the College of Architecture and Environmental Design at Arizona State University. He is dedicated to the mission of Sunflower Wellness. A survivor of Hodgkins Lymphoma, he also volunteers as a "cancer buddy" for newly diagnosed patients. He is passionate about eradicating the disease and ensuring that people living with cancer find the best quality of life.

Please help us continue our great work by making a donation today!

In Brief

- In April, **To Celebrate Life Breast Cancer Foundation**, based in Marin County, CA, awarded us a grant to help us create a cancer-exercise program for low-income women in Marin with breast cancer. Thank you so much!
- Sunflower Wellness Medical Advisory Board member **Donna Wilson**, who runs the cancer-exercise program at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York, has just released a new exercise DVD specifically for breast cancer survivors. A preview and details for purchasing the **Wilson Technique Workout** are available on our website at sunflowerwellness.org/Video.
- Sunflower Wellness gratefully acknowledges **UCSF Fitness & Recreation** for co-sponsoring the Sunflower Wellness seminar "Cancer-Exercise Training for Fitness Professionals" on May 3. We were joined by 17 trainers and instructors for a full day of lectures on exercise for people with cancer, presented by Regan and Jane, and featuring Bobbie Head, MD and Betty Smoot.

