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# Walking Through Cancer and Chemotherapy

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I have now lived through breast cancer, chemotherapy and two mastectomies. To maintain my strength and a positive attitude during those ordeals, I decided that walking, which I had begun as a form of exercise during my high school years, would be an effective therapy. As an adult, I continued long-distance and speed walking with my husband, an activity we enjoyed doing together. I highly recommend walking for anyone who can do so during a serious illness and/or during a period of recovery. Walking can be exhilarating and mentally stimulating. In addition, it puts very little stress on your joints, especially if you wear appropriately cushioned shoes, which I strongly recommend.

Following are the benefits that can accrue as a result of walking.

1. Walking can take your mind off the sadness that occurs during a period of ill health. As you walk, you can observe the beauties of nature, the flora and fauna that make up our world. If you walk in a city, then there are countless opportunities to observe people, to look at seasonal fashions and be inspired by the vivacity of life around you.
2. Many people suffering from illness are nervous and jittery, wondering what the future holds in store for them. In my case, walking had a calming effect. It made me feel as if I were part of nature, part of the stream of life. It made me feel whole.
3. During a period of illness and/or recovery, people tend to focus on themselves. It is as if the outside world ceases to exist. However, when walking, I came to see a bigger world than myself. All of a sudden, my problems were quite small, especially when compared to the size and variety of humanity. I was also able to focus on issues of importance to me and my family.
4. I asked friends to walk with me and that helped me develop deeper friendships with people who care about my health and welfare. Though chemo was exhausting, the walking I did with my friends energized me and made me feel as if I were on the road to better health. The presence of friends also eliminated any sense of being alone, of having to face my illness by myself.
5. If you live in a suburban community, rather than in the country or a city, walking with a headset can help you focus on important issues addressed by experts. I have listened to CDs offered by financiers, doctors, political leaders, legal scholars, religious leaders, authors of self-help books and even romantic novels. In addition, I have listened to TED talks and popular podcasts,

all of which helped me forget that I was ill.

6. Doctors from surgeons to internists to psychologists have shown, via experiments, that meditation is an effective therapy for reducing the effects of stress. The stress may be work or family related, or in my case, caused by my battle with cancer. I found that walking permitted me to meditate, to talk to and be in communion with a higher power, and to feel the stress pour out of my body. Following such a meditative walk, I was pleasantly surprised at how relaxed I felt.
7. Whether you walk slowly or briskly, walking gets your entire body in motion, improving cardiovascular function, increasing flexibility and toning muscles. It is particularly effective following

surgery. In my case, walking got me out of bed, off the couch and active once again. It made me feel alive, energetic and that life is worth living again. In addition, it improves circulation, especially after surgery or periods of inactivity.

8. If you are weight conscious or simply want to maintain a desired weight, walking is an effective means of burning calories without breaking a sweat.
9. Walking is a gentle, safe and effective means for strengthening your heart muscle, thus adding years to your life. €



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