

## CONTENTS

# Creating a Plan to Get Moving

BY LAURA BEIL

Scott Capozza knows how hard it is to find the best exercise routine during and after cancer. At age 22, when he was trying to realize his dream to qualify for the Boston Marathon, he was diagnosed with testicular cancer.

A dedicated runner since his early teens, Capozza suddenly found that a month in the hospital for cancer treatment left him more physically drained than he ever thought possible. “I had trouble getting up the stairs to my apartment,” he says. “It made me feel horrible. It was a psychological blow.”

Today, more than 10 years later, Capozza credits his return to running—he qualified for the Boston Marathon seven months after his last round of chemo—as the secret to his strong and continued recovery. As a physical therapist and certified cancer exercise trainer at the Connecticut Challenge Survivorship Clinic at Yale Cancer Center in New Haven, he now spends his days helping fellow survivors regain their strength and health through physical activity.

“I figure out what their life looks like and how they can fit exercise into their day,” he says. And that is always step one: have a plan. Consider your schedule, and figure out when you can exercise. Then decide what kind of activities appeal to you—after all, you have to like it, or you won’t stick with it. Whether it’s walking, biking, or something else, it’s important to get out and do something for half an hour each day, Capozza says.

He also recommends the buddy system. “Get a friend, a spouse, a co-worker to go with you. If you find a buddy, that makes it easier.” And according to recent research, walking with a dog also helps people stick with a routine.

Also think about any special considerations you might have. Has treatment left you at heightened risk of fractures? Water aerobics may be safer. Is your neighborhood not good for walking? Perhaps you can get a treadmill (you can rent one, if you don’t want to immediately commit to buying it) to use while you watch television.

Capozza also advises his patients to do strength training at whatever level they are able. However, he adds, “you want to start doing it under the supervision of someone who knows you’ve had cancer.” Some trainers, such as Capozza, have a special certification issued by the American College of Sports Medicine (use the ACSM ProFinder service at [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org) under the “Certification” tab, or call 317-637-9200, extension 115). Or your physician’s office might recommend trainers or gyms experienced with cancer patients.

Cancer survivors can generally do any exercise that makes them feel better, but be sure your instructor knows your medical history, including possible lung limitations or bone loss, so that modifications can be made if needed.

High-tech options for tracking your progress include a variety of fitness gadgets, such as the Nike + iPod Sport Kit; mobile apps like iFitness; and online activity logs, including one available through The President's Challenge program at [www.presidentschallenge.org](http://www.presidentschallenge.org). Of course, a spiral notebook can also do the trick.