My goal in assembling this teaching is for you to feel in control. I want to increase your knowledge and your confidence and reduce your fear and anxiety.

Are you anxious when your follow-up appointment or screening test rolls around? Do you feel you are sometimes not doing enough for yourself to remain cancer-free? There is a powerful defense force that you have—your immune system—and there are tools that help the immune system to be more effective.

When you implement the tools that support the immune system you are helping to reduce the chances of getting cancer again, building a healthier life for yourself and thriving after cancer in a way you never did before your diagnosis.

All of us have rogue cancer cells in our body. A healthy immune system can recognize and destroy these cells. A weak immune system cannot and worse still, an immune system that is stuck in a cycle of chronic inflammation can be promoting cancer. **This is why my two main goals for you are: to support your immune system and to reduce chronic inflammation.**

When you achieve these goals, your immune system is working for you and not against you, providing you with the surveillance and security your body needs.

The following list of action items is evidence-based. This means, I have not recommended it to you unless there is published research to support it.

Here is my list of immune-boosting and anti-inflammatory action items and the **WHAT - WHY - HOW TO** of each one. For more detailed information, [learn how to access the exclusive Immune System Training.](#)
Boosting the immune system means having a greater number of specialized cells with stronger weapons whose job is to destroy dangerous cells. These dangerous cells might be foreign cells like bacteria or viruses but also human cells that no longer function normally. Here are 5 simple action items you can do right now to boost your immune system:

#1: Physical Activity

**WHAT**
Physical activity includes exercise, as well as activity you do as part of your household chores, your work day or your means of transportation. They all matter, but the one that research studies focus the most on is exercise.

**WHY**
There are so many reasons why physical activity is important. First off, physical activity works directly on your immune system to protect you. It also reduces chronic inflammation.

Physical activity also has indirect pathways to help you. It can lead to loss of body fat. This is important because visceral fat, which is packed between the organs, is a known cancer-promoter. Physical activity is also a great stress reducer.

**HOW TO**
A regular routine of moderate exercise is a great addition to your immune boosting toolbox.

#2: Sleep

**WHAT**
A stretch of 7-8 hours for your body to rejuvenate its immune system, vascular system, muscles and skeleton.

**WHY**
Too little sleep is associated with type 2 diabetes, weight gain, increased blood pressure, mental, emotional and physical fatigue, and an impaired immune system.

**HOW TO**
Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night with a target of being asleep by 11:00 pm.
#3: Stress Management

**WHAT**
Your reaction to a stressor is the “fight or flight response”. This phenomenon, which is part of our innate survival mechanisms, changes our cardiovascular (heart and blood vessels), musculoskeletal (muscles and bones), neuroendocrine (nerves and hormones) and immune (defense force against disease) systems.

**WHY**
Stress can manifest itself in many ways in your body—muscle tension, high blood pressure, migraine headaches and yes, even cancer.

**HOW TO**
A regular stress management routine is an essential part of staying healthy. There are many paths to stress management. Some examples are exercise, meditation, journaling, art and music. Enjoy a regular routine of activities in your week that are stress-relieving for you.

#4: Being in Nature

**WHAT**
In the research on this topic, forests were the type of nature studied.

**WHY**
Forests improve your immune system because of the trees. Trees contain wood essential oils called phytoncides, which you breathe in as you enjoy the forest. The phytoncides increase the number of natural killer cells in your immune system defense force.

**HOW TO**
You can walk through a forest or simply sit and enjoy it. Both have been shown to be helpful.

#5: Laughter

**WHAT**
Laughing is important. It doesn't even matter whether it is genuine or fake.

**WHY**
Like physical activity, laughter has both direct and indirect effects on your immune system. It can increase the number of natural killer cells in your immune system, as well as improve sleep, blood flow, blood sugar levels, and reduce stress, anxiety and pain.

**HOW TO**
How to. It doesn’t matter what makes you laugh, it just matters that you do it. Some days, it feels like you could either laugh or cry—I prefer to laugh.
Reducing chronic inflammation means protecting your body from a part of the immune system that started out as helpful but has turned into a problem. You see, acute, or short-term, inflammation is very beneficial and allows our bodies to heal. Chronic inflammation on the other hand is long-term and disease-promoting. Here are 3 simple action items you can do right now to fight chronic inflammation:

#1: Physical Activity

**WHAT** Physical activity includes exercise, as well as activity you do as part of your household chores, your work day or your means of transportation. They all matter, but the one that research studies focus the most on is exercise.

**WHY** There are so many reasons why physical activity is important. Physical activity can lead to loss of body fat. This is important because visceral fat, which is packed between the organs, promotes chronic inflammation. And chronic inflammation, in turn, promotes cancer. Physical activity also reduces insulin and estrogen hormones, which can be cancer-promoters.

**HOW TO** A long-term routine of moderate exercise is essential. Make a commitment to make exercise part of your life. A good goal based on the evidence is to aim for 225 minutes per week of exercise. This would be 30 minutes, seven days a week or 45 minutes, five days a week.

#2: Weight Loss

**WHAT** Intentional weight loss that maximizes loss of excess body fat and minimizes loss of muscle.

**WHY** The larger your waist circumference is, the greater your risk of cancer. This is because there is a type of fat called visceral fat that packs itself around your internal organs and begins secreting hormones that drive chronic inflammation. And chronic inflammation, in turn, promotes cancer. The bigger your waist circumference is, the more visceral fat you have.

**HOW TO** Aim to reduce your excess body fat by eating a whole-food plant-based diet and participating in regular exercise. Losing as little as 5% of your body weight (this would be 10 lbs for a 200 lb person) can reduce chronic inflammation.
#3: Anti-Inflammatory Diet

**WHAT** Choosing foods that are high on the anti-inflammatory index and following a pattern of eating such as the Traditional Mediterranean diet, which has been shown to reduce chronic inflammation and cancer risk.

**WHY** Some foods can promote chronic inflammation and other foods can reduce it.

**HOW TO** Enjoy a regular consumption of omega-3 fatty acids by choosing cold water fish (salmon, sardines, herring, mackerel, anchovies) and spices such as turmeric, garlic, ginger, saffron. Also include black or green tea and high fibre foods in your diet. Model the Traditional Mediterranean Diet, which includes limiting saturated fat, trans fats, processed meat and excess calories.

**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES**

**Go-To Books**

**Foods that Fight Cancer by Richard Béliveau and Denis Gingras**
A great explanation of how foods can fight cancer based on the laboratory work of these two scientists.

**Anti-Cancer, A New Way of Life by David Servan-Schreiber**
David believes that we all have cancer cells in our body, but the environment that we create inside our bodies either nurtures or hinders these cells.

**Go-To Websites**

**www.aicr.org**
The American Institute for Cancer Research reports on the relationship between food, nutrition and exercise, and the prevention of cancer.

**www.lbcc.org**
Living Beyond Breast Cancer is a website that breast cancer patients should bookmark. I especially like downloading their mp3’s and listening on the go.