

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

**AMBER Study  
Update**

**Keeping Active  
During COVID**

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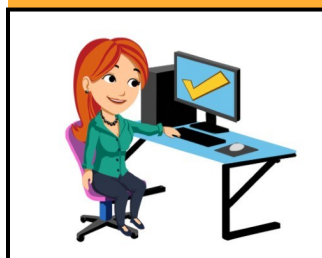
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website!



[www.amberstudy.com](http://www.amberstudy.com)

## Message from the Investigators

Greetings and warm wishes! We hope you are staying safe and healthy during these unprecedented times. We miss seeing your friendly faces!

In this edition of the newsletter, we provide a status update on AMBER along with profiling two participants who completed their Year 1 follow ups earlier in the year. We also highlight some ideas on how to stay active dur-



ing the pandemic and new exercise guidelines for cancer survivors. Lastly we offer some simple tips for supporting your mental health during these uncertain times.

As we reached our final recruitment of 1528 participants in 2019, we are now working towards completing our

Year 1, Year 3 and Year 5 follow ups. To date, 1252 participants have completed their Year 1 assessment, 779 participants have completed their Year 3 assessment and 388 participants have completed their Year 5 assessment.

Thank you again for your commitment and participation! We welcome any suggestions for future newsletters!

## AMBER Study Update

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have postponed all AMBER testing and blood collection since the middle of March.

In the meantime, we are contacting participants with respect to completing the questionnaires based on our regular AMBER timeline.

A big thank you to all those who have agreed to complete the questionnaires during this time and those who have returned them.

This allows us to continue our data collection and provides work for our staff



members. Testing will resume based on guidelines and recommendations from AHS. We look forward to seeing you again, hopefully in the near future!

In February, we sent out an email in regards to a qualitative sub-study conducted by

Dr. Lynn Corcoran and Dr. Jeff Vallance exploring the experience of women in the AMBER Study. Due to the overwhelming response we are unable to interview all those who contacted us. However, we sincerely thank everyone who volunteered to participate!!

Dr. Corcoran has contacted all participants and is currently conducting interviews. For any questions in regards to this sub-study, please email Dr. Corcoran at: [lynnc@athabascau.ca](mailto:lynnc@athabascau.ca)

# AMBER Participant Profiles

Get to know two participants in the AMBER Study!

## CALGARY



Calgary participant  
Frances D.

We profile Frances D. who completed her Year 1 follow up in Calgary.

### Why did you decide to take part in the AMBER study?

I believe that partaking in research is one of the ways that I can “pay it forward” by giving of my time, experience and efforts. If I can contribute to a collective greater good, hopefully medical advances will occur faster and people will be diagnosed, treated and recover in a more rapid manner.

### What kept you motivated during your treatment?

Being able to distinguish the facts from the “story” that

we make up and especially in “crisis” situations. I related to the cancer diagnosis from a fact-based perspective versus adding meaning to the diagnosis and treatment, such as acknowledging my body developed cancer and not that I had bad luck or had done something to cause the cancer.

### Have you made any lifestyle changes after receiving the results of your AMBER study testing?

Yes, after my initial testing in early 2019, I became more physically active on a consistent basis. When one of the exercise testers noted that as we age we may not be able to care for ourselves in our homes as long as we would like, I realized that improving my health is not just a “now” thing

but will impact how I create my future into my 60s, 70s and 80s.

### How are you staying active during the pandemic?

I have been staying active by creating a 30-minute “in-house” exercise routine such as running up and down a flight of stairs, using my resistance bands in my stretching routine, and doing wall push-ups. During the nicer weather I have been playing ball with my kids on the driveway and going for two walks per day.

### As you stay home, any fun or new activities you have done recently?

I bought washable paints and have been painting rocks with my kids to decorate flower pots once we begin gardening.

## EDMONTON



Edmonton participant  
Evelyn C.

We profile Evelyn C. who completed her Year 1 follow up in Edmonton.

### Did you make any lifestyle changes after your diagnosis?

I thought I lived a healthy life and had a good diet. After reading the book named “Invisible Miracles: The revolution in Cellular Nutrition”, I quickly adopted the Life of SEEDS:

S= adequate Sleep  
E= moderate Exercise  
E= stable Emotion  
D= well-balance Diet  
S= high-quality Supplements.

Health is our choice. It is our responsibility to gain the knowledge about the changing environment and for improving our health to the optimal.

### What is something new that you learned during your diagnosis/treatment?

During my treatment, I found that I was not alone and that there was a strong group of medical staff around me. They were very kind and helpful to all cancer patients with their love and their smiles.

### How are you staying active and/or keeping busy during the pandemic?

During the recent pandemic outbreak, everyone's mood is not good, the economy is in decline, and all our daily lives are impacted by social isolation. I try to stay out of the fear zone and maintain my regular

activities. I have also been learning how to make power point presentations and do some public speaking. I was able to deliver a presentation to an audience via Zoom.

I am also learning how to use a cell phone app to edit pictures and even short videos! It is fun to do these things together with friends.

I hope everyone takes this opportunity to reconnect with family and take care of yourself and those who are in need. Stay healthy and safe.



In late 2019, the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) published new exercise recommendations for cancer survivors. These guidelines were based on translating the latest, most up-to-date scientific findings and turning them into real-world applications for everyday use. For cancer survivors these exercise guidelines include:

- Cancer patients and survivors should aim to complete **30 minute** sessions of aerobic and resistance exercise at least **3 times per week** to achieve health benefits.
- Cancer survivors should incorporate exercise to help improve survival after a diagnosis of breast, colon, and prostate cancer.
- Exercising during and after cancer treatment improves fatigue, anxiety, depression, physical function, quality of life and does not exacerbate lymphedema.

The importance of keeping active may be the least of our concerns as we all try to manage our day to day lives during the pandemic. However, continuing or incorporating activity into our daily lives has a direct benefit on our well-being during this time. Exercise is known to help boost our immune system and has well-known positive benefits on our mental health relating to stress, anxiety, depression, anger, and boredom. Since fitness studios and recreation centres are currently closed, here are some tips to stay active:

### Indoor Activities

- Put some music on and walk briskly around the house or up and down the stairs for 10 - 15 minutes, 2 – 3 times per day
- Dance to your favourite music
- Turn your housework into a calorie-burning workout. Polishing and mopping are great for the arms!
- Reduce sitting time. Stand up during commercial breaks, at the end of a TV episode, after a chapter of a book, or every 30 minutes.



### Outdoor Activities

- Enjoy the outdoors by going for a walk, jog or bike ride.
- Be active in a local park.
- Do gardening and lawn work.
- Use other outdoor spaces such as driveways, backyards, sidewalks, cul-de-sacs
- Play active games with your family.

During the pandemic we may feel like we have no control, however, we do have control over our behaviours. Staying active, decreasing our screen time and getting adequate sleep can be some first steps in coping with the uncertainty that we are all facing.

#### Sources:

ACSM - American College of Sports Medicine – [www.acsm.org](http://www.acsm.org)  
CSEP - Canadian Society of Exercise Physiology – [www.csep.ca](http://www.csep.ca)



# Supporting Your Mental Health

Our lives have been turned upside down and all our normal routines have been disrupted. This pandemic has caused unexpected anxiety and stress which, in turn, affects our mental health.

Here are some simple tips to consider during this time to support your mental health:

- Recognize what you can control and try to stay positive. As much as possible maintain a routine. Focus on what needs to happen today and make a list of what needs to be done in the next day or week.
- Limit the amount of time spent watching, reading or listening to the news. For example, once in the morning and once in the evening.
- Get the facts about COVID-19 from reliable sources such as Alberta Health Services (AHS), Alberta Health (provincial government ministry) or from the Public Health Agency of Canada (federal government).
- Practice self care such as writing in a journal, practicing a favourite hobby, reading a book or improving your space by repairing, organizing or decorating.
- Be mindful of your thoughts, feelings and body sensations. Practicing breathing techniques can be a way to help manage stress and anxiety by calming your nervous system and helping you to think more clearly. Take a slow deep breath in as you count to 5 and then exhale, also counting to 5 (repeat 10 times). Practice doing this throughout your day.

## Available Resources:

Mental Health Helpline: 1(877) 303 - 2642

Provincial 211 (provides referrals for community, gov't and social services)

For more resources visit AHS - [www.ahs.ca](http://www.ahs.ca) and on the main page click on "Help in Tough Times."

Source: Alberta Health Services



**Wellspring** Calgary and Edmonton are offering a wide range of programs and supports virtually via Zoom and by phone. All of the programs and supports are free and no referral is required. Here is a small sample of what is being offered:

- ✓ Expressive Arts, exercise, yoga, meditation, food and nutrition, Tai Chi, gardening, COVID tips, Healing Journey, Returning to Work, Brain Fog sessions
- ✓ Money Matters (one-on-one helping people navigate the programs and forms for income replacement, insurance, employment, etc.)
- ✓ Young Adult (YA) programs, including exercise and kitchen parties

### For more information contact:

Calgary: <https://wellspringcalgary.ca/> or (587) 747 - 0260

Edmonton: <https://wellspring.ca/edmonton/> or (780) 758 - 4433



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