

PALS For Life Fact Sheet

Vision: Supporting Breast Cancer Survivors in their journey to being independent in managing their physical health and controlling lymphedema. PALS for Life welcomes anyone who has been affected by breast cancer, with a doctor referral and physical therapy consultation.

Mission: Trained ACSM Cancer Specialists provide guidance in administering the PALS for life protocol. It is an evidence based protocol formulated by the University of Pennsylvania, shown to strengthen Cancer Survivors, and help control Lymphedema symptoms.

The Need: Support is needed for the Survivor in living a high quality of life into remission and beyond. Breast cancer is the most common cancer in women in the United States, except for skin cancers. It accounts for about 30% (or 1 in 3) of all new female cancers each year.

The American Cancer Society's estimates for breast cancer in the United States for 2024 are:

- About 310,720 new cases of invasive breast cancer will be diagnosed in women.
- About 56,500 new cases of DCIS will be diagnosed.
- About 42,250 women will die from breast cancer.

Lymphedema is a condition of swelling in the extremities due to the inability for lymph fluid to drain, this impacts about $\frac{1}{5}$ or 20%. Many women who are diagnosed with breast cancer undergo surgery to remove the lymph nodes, lymphedema is a risk factor. Controlling and caring for the condition is important in reducing pain in the upper body, and allowing for body toxins to drain. Exercise, rather than not using the extremities is more beneficial to the individual in controlling the condition over a lifetime.

The Curriculum: PALS stands for Physical Activity and Lymphedema Study, which was developed and researched by The University of Pennsylvania. The 12-week exercise program is administered slow and steady over 2-training sessions each week. Each session puts a heavy focus on mobilizing the upper body, and lymphatic stretching. The women begin by using the smallest weights possible, and only increasing volume in weeks 3 and 4. Weight is only increased every 2 weeks, and by the smallest increment possible. A certified Physical Therapist is invited during week 6 of the program to host a seminar on Lymphedema. Upon the completion of 12 weeks in PALS, Bridge is a continuation of the program, and we have Dieticians from the Norris Cotton Cancer Center join us for ongoing support.



To Start Exercising: To register for PALS, get a referral from your Physical Therapist and Primary Care Provider or Oncologist. From there, contact Program Director, Erin K. Buck to register. We have a Physician's Permission form available to make getting the referral easy!

Exerciser's Commitment: The commitment to this program is essential to its success. Because the nature of the protocol relies on consistency to reduce the chances of lymphatic flare-ups and injury. It is expected you are able to attend the twice/week sessions for the duration of the 12 weeks. Missing a class or two happens, but if you have a longer vacation planned, please be cognisant that the program is in-demand for individuals who will prioritize it in their schedule.

Cost: PALS for Life is 100% grant funded. We rely on community donations to sustain the program, and continue its growth. We also submit for funding from local initiatives that support causes like ours.

Volunteers: Certified Cancer-Specialists who work Directly with our Program Director may become involved. If you would like to get involved, please contact Erin K. Buck.

Funding and Expenses: The Upper Valley Aquatic Center in White River Junction, VT hosts the program in its current state at no cost to the participants. Funding is received through generous donations of time and resources from community members and instructors. We currently receive funding from annual grant allocations.

History: Erin Buck is the Program Director for the PALS for Life Program in Vermont and New Hampshire since she brought the program to the Upper Valley in 2013. She has been provided permission from those who completed the PALS for Life study to instruct this program and administer the protocol. The program has helped so many women who have fought and are currently fighting breast cancer. The program has adapted into incorporating educational pieces that go over holistic life-style habits in empowering these women to live their daily lives.

The Upper Valley Aquatic Center is a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization with a mission to deliver a diverse range of high quality fitness and aquatic programs accessible to all members of the Upper Valley community.

Contact

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