



“  
it’s never too  
late to start  
exercising  
and see some  
results

**ON THE BALL:** Cancer rehabilitation and lymphedema therapist Kate Perkins works with a post-breast cancer patient to soften scar tissue including using the fit ball to help stretch and open up her chest to lengthen the muscles and increase her range of shoulder movement.

# Exercise increases mobility

## Alison Houston

A NEW clinic at Erina is offering hope, strength, flexibility and mobility to cancer patients during and after treatment, regardless of how long ago it occurred.

That’s particularly good news for seniors who may be unaware of the huge potential benefits of exercise to recovery.

Specialist occupational therapist Kate Perkins opened the state-of-the-art Cancer Rehabilitation and Lymphatic Solutions clinic in August.

It comprises a

dedicated exercise area and two treatment rooms.

“It’s not a clinical space and people breathe a sigh of relief when they come in because they’ve seen enough of doctors’ surgeries and hospitals,” Kate said.

Services include early monitoring and risk minimisation of cancer-related lymphedema, which is swelling of limbs most commonly caused by removal of, or damage to, lymph nodes.

“Lymphedema can become a life-long condition, but if it is detected early symptoms can be stopped or

reduced,” Kate said.

The clinic also deals with management of fatigue, scar tissue which can restrict movement, and offers the internationally renowned Pinc and Steel Next Steps exercise class.

This combines Pilates, yoga and cardiovascular exercises, improving breathing techniques, posture and movement patterns.

It is specifically designed to rebuild strength, flexibility and stamina following cancer treatment.

“It’s essential that patients are educated about the importance of

exercise in improving outcomes for any cancer treatment,” Kate said.

Exercise during and after treatment has been shown to help manage common side effects, improve treatment response and even reduce the risk of cancer returning, she said.

By maintaining mobility people were also able to continue more easily with their normal daily lives, thus increasing confidence, independence and overall quality of life.

Older patients often believed that rest was the best cure, Kate said.

Some had a fear of movement after

chemotherapy and surgery.

However, the Clinical Oncology Society of Australia says that exercise should be prescribed to all cancer patients as a standard part of their cancer care.

Kate said it was frustrating that this still didn’t occur in every case, with some older breast cancer survivors “barely able to lift their arms because of scar tissue”, while other people struggled with the lack of flexibility to even put on the compression garments they required.

An occupational therapist for six years,

now specialising in cancer rehab and lymphedema, Kate said she had previously worked hands-on as a remedial massage therapist with cancer patients.

She said seniors were generally very proactive in exercising when they knew the possibilities, with one of her clients being a 94-year-old man who “has really embraced it and is very mobile”.

“Seniors want to have the knowledge to be able to help themselves,” Kate said.

*Info: [lymphaticsolutions.com.au](http://lymphaticsolutions.com.au) or phone 02 4312 7033.*

# Stop spring fever ruining best month of the year

SPRING is finally here and that means hay fever is right around the corner.

The good news is you don’t need to jump straight to nasal sprays and antihistamines when pollen and allergens are in the air.

Here are some tips to avoid triggering your hay fever symptoms this spring:

## At home

■ When the pollen count is high, keep windows and doors closed at home.

■ Do your dusting with a damp cloth, rather than a dry one, to better collect the dust and stop any pollen from being spread around.

■ Avoid fresh flowers if that’s the cause of your symptoms. Consider planting a low-allergen garden around your home and remove any weeds or trees if you are sensitive to them.

■ Keep pets out of the house when your symptoms flare up. If your pet does come inside,

wash them regularly to remove any allergens from their fur.

■ Don’t smoke or let other people smoke in your house. Smoking and breathing in other people’s smoke will irritate the lining of your nose, eyes, throat and airways, and can make your symptoms worse.

## On the move

■ Keep the windows up and consider buying a pollen filter for air vents and use recirculating

air-conditioning in the car.

■ If your trigger is grass, avoid mowing, playing or walking in grassy areas, and camping. If you have to do so, wear a mask or take a non-drowsy antihistamine.

■ Try not to go outside until after midday, especially when the pollen count is high, it’s windy or after thunderstorms. You can check the pollen count for the day or the pollen forecast on the Weatherzone website, go to [weatherzone.com.au](http://weatherzone.com.au).

## Clothes

■ Change your clothes and take a shower after being outdoors to remove the pollen on your body.

■ If possible, avoid drying clothes outside.

This will help prevent bringing pollen into your house.

■ Wear wraparound sunglasses to stop pollen getting into your eyes when you are outdoors. Rinse your eyes when you get home.

## At work

■ If your hay fever is due to allergens in your workplace, you should advise your employer of this fact so that you can work together to reduce your exposure.

■ Not sure if it’s hay fever or something more serious? Take this quick symptom check and advice and information about what to do next, go to [healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker/tool](http://healthdirect.gov.au/symptom-checker/tool).

*For more, go to [about.healthdirect.org.au](http://about.healthdirect.org.au).*