

## What the King's healthy lifestyle and love of homeopathy means for his cancer diagnosis

Doctors believe that there are many aspects of the King Charles's approach to life which will serve him well in his upcoming health battle

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The King's unusually active life may stand him in good stead CREDIT: Getty  
As a notorious workaholic and stickler for his daily routine, taking a step back as [he undergoes cancer treatment](#) is unlikely to come easy to King Charles, even at the age of 75.

A man who is renowned for dashing off missives to staff in the early hours while continuing to tend to paperwork while travelling on state visits, is unlikely to adapt easily to long periods of convalescence at home after undergoing chemotherapy or radiotherapy.

But at the same time, doctors believe that there are many aspects of [the King's approach to life](#) which will serve him well in [his upcoming health battle](#). To begin with, there is his positive and resolute mindset which cancer specialists have always found to play an underrated role when it comes to treatment outcomes.

“It’s anecdotal but when I speak to oncologists, they say that people who have a stronger and more positive outlook, tend to do better,” says Dr Louis Fox, a translational oncology researcher at King’s College London.

Last year, Stanford University psychologists provided new evidence that mindset can improve the health of [cancer patients](#). They designed a study in which they took 361 newly diagnosed patients and gave them an interactive online course to shift their mindset from ‘cancer is a catastrophe’ to ‘cancer is manageable’. By the end, all patients who completed the modules saw a 10 per cent improvement in their emotional wellbeing, physical health, and general functioning.

The King has a positive and resolute mindset, which cancer specialists have found to play an underrated role when it comes to treatment outcomes

Dr Ziad Tukmachi, a London-based GP, says that having been diagnosed at an early stage, the King will benefit from less aggressive treatment, which will make it easier for him to retain some of his usual quality of life.

“A lot of the time when you have intense chemotherapy or radiotherapy, it decreases your appetite,” he says. “It makes you very tired and lethargic, you don’t tend to want to eat very much. Patients tend to get a lot of sores in their mouth so eating is quite painful, and they usually tend to go for more soft consistency foods or soups, liquid-based stuff, rather than things that are difficult to swallow.”

More localised treatments such as targeted radiotherapy have less of an impact on the rest of the body. “If it hasn’t spread beyond the margins of the organ, which it doesn’t sound like it has in King Charles’ case, it’s probably more likely to be targeted radiotherapy that’s used to shrink the tumour,” says Tukmachi. “This means he may not experience that systemic impact on appetite and eating which people get when they have regular cycles of chemo.”

Another factor which may stand the King in good stead is the [unusually active life which he still leads](#), despite being well into his 70s. A brisk lunchtime walk is a common part of the monarch’s daily routine while in his autobiography *Spare*, Prince Harry vividly described the daily stretching and strength routine that his father still religiously follows.

Healthy habits: the King enjoys a brisk lunchtime walk as part of his daily routine

Fox says that there is increasing evidence that still engaging in various forms of exercise post-diagnosis, can be beneficial in the fight against certain cancers, helping some patients stabilise their condition and prevent disease progression.

“We don’t really understand the mechanisms fully because this effect could be exerted in a number of ways,” he says. “There’s a lot of speculation with regards to mobilisation of immune cells, better tolerance to systemic treatments such as chemotherapy, and potentially better delivery of pharmacological treatments. For example, if you exercise a lot, you have more vascularisation and some of those veins can permeate into the tumour so the drugs might be better delivered.”

While each individual cancer patient’s needs and what they might be capable of doing, are different, Fox says that strength exercises are thought to be just as important as aerobic exercises such as running or fast walking.

“The more that a person can do, the better really,” he says. “There is a particular focus also on strength exercises because these mobilise various cell signalling proteins that we think could play some role in altering the environment in which the tumour is trying to thrive.”

The King is also a known advocate of some alternative therapies such as homeopathy, although it remains to be seen how much of a role this will play in his battle against cancer.

The then Prince Charles trying Enmei Tea on a visit to the Kurohime Medical Herb Tea company in Japan, 2008

“Homeopathy is more similar to Reiki or acupuncture in the fact that we are trying to stimulate the body’s own energy to get the healing to start,” says Neela Prabhu, a Croydon-based qualified homeopath and former community pharmacist, who runs a practice called Homeopathic Harmony. “It treats the person. So whether they’re presenting with cancer or a sore throat, it will be an individualised treatment to them which seeks to address the energetic imbalance in that patient.”

But as for the King’s future prognosis, doctors feel that his relatively clean bill of health over the years, along with a diet high in foods such as fish and fibre-rich grains and seeds, will stand him in fairly good stead in the coming months.

“The healthier you are, the less likely you are to have complications, particularly if you end up needing surgery [to remove the tumour],” says Tukmachi. “If you’ve got good, well-controlled blood pressure, your diet is healthy, you’ve got good cholesterol, no heart problems or diabetes, these things will work for you. You’re more likely to have a better outcome if you have less medical comorbidities.”