

Decades, One Routine: The actual daily routine that has structured my mother's life through decades of cancer — and that her oncologist now describes as remarkable.

My mother, Ute, is German. She came to the United States carrying a language that did not always have a word for what the doctors were telling her. She was first diagnosed with a malignant melanoma decades ago. She is in her 80s now and doing well — active, mobile, and doing everything she wants to do. From the day of her first diagnosis, she has had a daily routine she does not break — not on chemotherapy days, not on hard days, not on days when she didn't want to. The routine below is what she actually does. The book explains why each piece matters. This page is what it looks like when someone lives it. — Sonja

6:30 AM Wake at the same time, every day

Out of bed within 10 minutes — no scrolling.

Why: *A consistent wake time anchors the circadian rhythm — the master clock for immune timing, hormone release, and DNA repair.*

6:45 AM Morning light, glass of water

Step outside or to a sunny window for 5–10 minutes. Drink a full glass of water before anything else.

Why: *Morning light within 30 minutes of waking improves nighttime sleep and lifts mood. Hydration kicks in lymphatic and renal clearance.*

7:00 AM Green tea + turmeric

One cup of green tea with a half teaspoon of turmeric and a pinch of black pepper.

Why: *EGCG (green tea) and curcumin (turmeric) are two of the most-studied anti-inflammatory compounds in integrative oncology. Piperine in black pepper increases curcumin absorption by up to 2,000%.*

7:30 AM Anti-inflammatory breakfast

Berries, ground flaxseed, walnuts, plain yogurt or oats. Or a vegetable omelette with olive oil. Variety matters more than perfection.

Why: *Polyphenols and omega-3s in the morning reduce inflammatory markers throughout the day.*

8:30 AM Morning walk

20–30 minutes outdoors. On bad days, even 10 minutes around the block.

Why: *Morning movement reduces fatigue, improves insulin sensitivity for the rest of the day, and exposes you to more daylight (compounding the circadian benefit).*

10:00 AM Morning supplements (with food)

Curcumin (high-bioavailability), vitamin D3 with K2, omega-3 (EPA/DHA). Always with a meal containing some fat.

Why: *Curcumin, D3, and omega-3s are fat-soluble — taking them with food dramatically improves absorption.*

12:30 PM **Plant-forward lunch**

Big salad with olive oil, plus a protein (fish, beans, lentils, chicken). Cruciferous vegetable daily — broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, or kale. Chop and let it sit 10 minutes before cooking to activate sulforaphane.

Why: Cruciferous vegetables activate the body's Phase II detoxification enzymes — a key mechanism for clearing carcinogens and metabolic waste.

2:00 PM **Rest or short stretch**

20-minute lie-down, light stretching, or gentle yoga. Not a nap — a pause.

Why: Parasympathetic activation in the afternoon counters the cortisol cycle that, when chronically elevated, suppresses immune function.

4:00 PM **Second movement: resistance or longer walk**

Two days a week: light resistance training (bands or 2–5 lb weights). Other days: a second 20-minute walk, ideally in nature.

Why: Resistance training is the single best protection against cachexia (cancer-related muscle loss) — which is responsible for up to 20% of cancer deaths.

6:00 PM **Early dinner**

Fish, mushrooms (medicinal varieties when available), seasonal vegetables, olive oil. Smaller than lunch.

Why: Medicinal mushrooms (turkey tail, reishi, maitake) contain beta-glucans that activate natural killer cells. An earlier, lighter dinner gives the digestive system a longer overnight rest, improving sleep quality.

8:30 PM **Wind-down: no screens, dim lights**

Read, listen to music, talk to family, journal. Lights down. No work. No news. No phone.

Why: Blue light from screens suppresses melatonin production by up to 50% — and melatonin is itself a tumor suppressor.

10:00 PM **Bed**

Same time every night. Cool, dark, quiet room (65–68°F). If sleep doesn't come, get out of bed and read by dim light until it does.

Why: Deep sleep is when natural killer cell activity is highest, growth hormone repairs tissue, and the glymphatic system clears metabolic waste from the brain.

This is one woman's routine, not a prescription. Ute's routine has been shaped by decades of trial, oncology guidance, and the science detailed in *Breathe & Bloom*. Adapt it to your body, your treatment phase, and your oncology team's guidance. You are not Ute. The point is not to copy her routine — it is to build one of your own with the same four pillars at its center.