

# Life After Treatment

The Next Chapter in  
Your Survivorship Journey



As you near the end of your cancer treatment, you may have unanswered questions about what lies ahead. There are many resources to help you get answers to your questions and find the support you need. This guide contains key information for you and your family to discuss with your doctor or nurse, and additional support to help throughout your cancer experience.



*"I was afraid and not prepared. Everyone said it would be fine, but it was not very reassuring. I was terrified. I got so familiar with people at the doctor's office, and then I realized I would not see them anymore."*

# Your Treatment Summary and Survivorship Care Plan

You most likely have been working with a team of doctors and nurses during your cancer treatment. As you near the end of treatment, you will have fewer visits with your cancer care team. Some people prefer making fewer trips to visit their cancer care team. Others may feel lost and alone without a doctor or nurse to answer their questions. To help ease this transition, ask your oncologist to provide a summary of the treatments you received. This summary will be helpful when discussing your cancer experience with your primary care provider, family doctor, or new members of your health care team. Working together with your oncologist and your family doctor, you can develop a survivorship care plan. Visit the American Cancer Society website at [www.cancer.org/survivorshipcareplans](http://www.cancer.org/survivorshipcareplans) for a list of organizations that provide survivorship care plans.

## Treatment Summary

- Describes your cancer diagnosis
- Describes medical treatments you received or are receiving
- Helps you talk with health care professionals who were not part of your cancer care team
- Gives you a record of your cancer treatments

## Survivorship Care Plan

- Should include a treatment summary
- Describes what follow-up appointments and tests you will need and when you should have them
- Describes preventive measures you can take to help you stay healthy
- Describes possible side effects of your cancer treatments and ways to manage them
- Describes ways to manage your physical and mental health



*"I received information from my doctor on side effects, and it made me realize what I was experiencing was normal."*

# Side Effects of Cancer Treatment

## Physical Issues

Even after cancer treatment ends, you may have some physical side effects. The kind of side effects you have and how long they last will depend on the treatment you received. By being aware of the common side effects of cancer treatment, you can work with your doctor to help treat them. They might include:

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Problems fighting infection
- Lymphedema (swelling of arms or legs)
- Memory loss or trouble concentrating
- Changes in sexual function or fertility
- Nerve problems such as numbness and tingling
- Bone and joint problems or muscle weakness
- Skin changes
- Secondary cancers
- Anemia

## **Emotional and Social Issues**

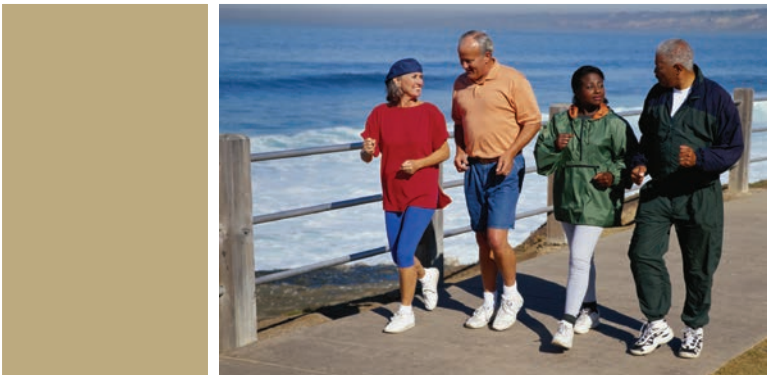
Cancer affects much more than just your physical health. There is often stress along with a cancer experience, and it does not always end when treatment ends. In fact, those feelings may increase for some people after treatment. Areas of concern may include:

- Going back to work after a long time away
- Dealing with financial concerns
- Rebuilding relationships with friends and family
- Establishing a new “normal” and returning to day-to-day life
- Feeling uncertain about the future
- Coping with fears of cancer returning

# Managing Your Health and Wellness After Treatment

After treatment is over, there are a number of things you can do to stay healthy and reduce your risk for heart attack, stroke, and even other cancers.

- Avoid smoking cigarettes and using other tobacco products, such as chewing tobacco or cigars.
- Limit the number of alcoholic beverages to no more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 drinks per day for men, if you drink at all.
- Be physically active to help stay healthy and reduce stress.



*"At first I was hesitant to begin exercising again, but it was reassuring to learn I could resume at my own pace."*



- Eat a healthy diet with more fruits and vegetables and less red and processed meats.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Protect your skin from exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds.
- See your doctor and dentist for regular checkups.

You may think of a number of questions that you want to ask your doctor or nurse, or that you want to read about online. Keep track of these questions and the answers you find in the following spaces, and share them with your doctor or nurse at your next visit.

<b>Question:</b>
1.
2.
3.

# Cancer Information Resources

Many people may find help by talking about their concerns with others who have had cancer. Support is available online, by phone, and face-to-face.

You can find more information on support services by calling any of the following trusted cancer organizations or by visiting their websites.\*



*"It's important for me to share what I experienced. I'm so passionate about this because someone took my hand and walked me through. I'd like to take someone else's hand."*

## American Cancer Society

Visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) or call 1-800-227-2345, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to talk with a trained cancer information specialist to get answers to your questions about cancer or to learn about programs and resources to help you get healthy and thrive after treatment. The American Cancer Society is here for you every step of the way.

## The Survivorship Center

Visit [www.cancer.org/survivorshipcenter](http://www.cancer.org/survivorshipcenter) for posttreatment cancer survivorship resources.

## National Cancer Institute

Visit [www.cancer.gov](http://www.cancer.gov) or call 1-800-422-6237 to talk with a trained cancer information specialist. The National Cancer Institute has information and resources to help answer your questions after you finish cancer treatment.

## LIVESTRONG

Visit [www.livestrong.org](http://www.livestrong.org) to get information about support programs for cancer survivors. You can also fill out and print your own survivorship care plan.

## Cancer Support Community

Visit [www.cancersupportcommunity.org](http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org) to view cancer survivorship information and resources.

## National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

Visit [www.canceradvocacy.org](http://www.canceradvocacy.org) to listen to survivor stories and to order resources. *Teamwork: The Cancer Patient's Guide to Talking With Your Doctor* is a resource you can download that includes information dedicated to life after cancer treatment ends.

## CancerCare

Visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) to learn about free emotional and practical support for people with cancer, caregivers, loved ones, and the bereaved.

## Survivorship A to Z

Visit [www.survivorshipatoz.org/cancer](http://www.survivorshipatoz.org/cancer) to find practical, financial, and legal information to help you after a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

## Patient Advocate Foundation

Visit [www.patientadvocate.org](http://www.patientadvocate.org) to find out about services offered to assist you with insurance and employment-related issues.

*\* Inclusion on this list does not imply endorsement by the American Cancer Society.*

## Tips for Finding Trusted Information

The listing above represents a few organizations involved in the fight against cancer. If you visit other sites, the following tips may help you sort through the information to determine if it is current, correct, and right for you.

- **Who is giving you the information?**

Often, the most trusted information sources are government agencies, hospitals, universities, and cancer-focused organizations. They typically have web addresses that end in .org, .edu, and .gov.

- **When was the information last updated?**

Health information is always changing, so look for the most current information possible. Web pages should include the date the information was posted or updated, and booklets and brochures should have the date they were printed inside the front cover or on the back page.

- **Whom is the information written for?**

Use websites that are written for cancer survivors, which are easy to read and understand, rather than websites for doctors, nurses, or other health care professionals.

- **Does the resource list its purpose?**

Look for websites whose goal is to inform you about a specific topic, and avoid those that promote or sell products. They may have biased or incorrect health information.

- **Is an author or source listed?**

Try to find the name of the author or the source of the information, and whether they are an expert on the topic. Websites you can trust often list the source of information from scientific journals to support the information on their website.

- **Is the information balanced or unbiased?**

Information should be balanced, giving the pros and cons of a topic. Having more than one viewpoint suggests an unbiased resource. Expert opinions should be supported by scientific evidence.

## The Survivorship Center

The National Cancer Survivorship Resource Center (The Survivorship Center) is a collaboration between the American Cancer Society, The George Washington University Cancer Institute, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, funded by cooperative agreement #5U55DP003054 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, to address the needs of those living with, through, and beyond cancer. Visit [www.cancer.org/survivorshipcenter](http://www.cancer.org/survivorshipcenter) to learn more about The Survivorship Center.

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[cancer.org](http://cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345  
1.866.228.4327 TTY

