



# After Cancer Treatment is Finished



Every cancer. Every life.®

Finishing cancer treatment or moving to maintenance therapy can be both stressful and exciting. You might have questions about how to manage your health care, stay healthy, and adjust to changes in your routines.

Some people with cancer finish their recommended treatment and don't need more treatment.

But people with some types of cancer may need ongoing or maintenance therapy for long periods of time to help control the cancer after the first recommended treatment is done.

This booklet is for people nearing the end of cancer treatment when no maintenance therapy is planned. It provides information about how to adjust to life and manage your health after cancer treatment is completed.

# Your treatment summary and survivorship care plan

You most likely have been working with a team of doctors and nurses during your treatment called your cancer care team. As you get close to the end of treatment, you will likely have fewer visits with them. Some people like making fewer trips to visit their cancer care team. Others may find they miss regularly seeing their cancer care team and having their questions answered.

To help with this transition, ask your cancer care team to give you a summary of the treatments you received (treatment summary or cancer treatment plan). This summary will help as you talk about your cancer and treatments with your primary care team, other specialists, or health care professionals you may see in the future.

Working with your cancer care team, you can develop a survivorship care plan. A survivorship care plan might include information like how often you should have checkups, the type of follow-up tests you will need, symptoms to watch out for, possible late and long-term effects of the cancer treatments you got, or suggestions for living healthy after treatment.

Visit the American Cancer Society website at [cancer.org/content/cancer/en/survivorshipcareplans](https://www.cancer.org/content/cancer/en/survivorshipcareplans) for more information and examples of survivorship care plans for different cancers.

## **Your treatment summary or cancer treatment plan:**

- Describes your cancer diagnosis
- Describes treatments you got or are still getting
- Lists side effects that you had or might still have
- Helps you talk with health care professionals who were not part of your cancer care team

## **Your survivorship care plan:**

- Should include a treatment summary or cancer treatment plan
- Lists the follow-up appointments and tests you will need and when you should have them
- Provides names and contact information for your cancer care team
- Includes symptoms you should watch for and who to contact if they develop
- Lists side effects of your treatment you may still be having, as well as late effects to watch for
- Describes things you can do to help you stay healthy

# Possible side effects of cancer treatment

Even after cancer treatment ends, you may have some physical or emotional side effects. The kind of side effects that you have and how long they last will depend on the treatment you received.

Late side effects are ones that start after treatment ends. Long-term (or chronic) side effects are ones that start during treatment and continue even after treatment is over. Some types of late and long-term side effects might include:

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Lymphedema (swelling that occurs after lymph nodes are removed or damaged)
- Memory loss or trouble concentrating
- Changes in sexual function or fertility
- Numbness and tingling in hands and feet
- Bone and joint problems or muscle weakness
- Bowel and bladder changes
- Skin changes
- Heart or lung problems
- Anemia

- Increased risk of infection
- Anxiety or depression
- Second cancers

Talk to your cancer care team about what side effects that you might still have after treatment and what can be done to manage them.

## **Emotional and social issues**

Having cancer can be stressful and the stress doesn't always go away when treatment ends. In fact, some people might be more stressed after treatment. You may be concerned about:

- Going back to work after a long time away
- Having enough money or being able to make money
- Connecting with friends and family again
- Finding a new “normal” and returning to day-to-day life
- Feeling unsure about the future
- The cancer coming back

Having support from friends and families or being in a support group with other people who have finished cancer treatment can help you cope.

You might also find it helpful to talk to a health care professional such as a social worker, counselor, or psychologist about any concerns you might have. Your cancer care or primary care team might also be able to refer you to any support groups or resources that might be available in your area.

## **Managing your health after treatment**

After finishing treatment, there are things you can do to help lower the risk of the cancer returning, of having a new cancer, or developing other serious diseases. These steps can also help improve your health. You will want to check with your cancer care team to see if you have any food, diet, or physical restrictions before making changes to your diet or participating in exercise.

- Stay away from all types of tobacco and tobacco smoke, including secondhand smoke.
- It is best not to drink alcohol. If you do drink, men should have no more than 2 drinks each day and women no more than 1 drink each day.
- Get to and stay at a healthy weight.
- Get moving with regular physical activity. Limit the time you spend sitting or lying down and return to normal daily activities as soon as possible. Start slowly and build up the amount of physical activity over time. Try for at least 150-300 minutes of moderate (or 75-150 minutes of vigorous intensity) activity each week. Include strength training exercises at least 2 days per week.

- Follow a healthy eating pattern. Try to eat a variety of colorful fruits and vegetables and plenty of high-fiber foods, like whole grain breads and cereals. Avoid or limit red (beef, pork, or lamb) and processed meats, highly processed foods, and sugary foods and beverages.
- Protect your skin and eyes from ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun. Use sunscreen with at least SPF 30. Stay away from sunlamps and tanning beds.
- See your doctor and dentist for regular checkups.
- Get recommended cancer screenings.

## **Questions to ask your cancer care team**

Here are some questions you can ask your cancer care team about your follow-up care:

- How often should I return for a follow-up visit?
- What tests will I need when I come for my follow-up visits?  
How long will I need to continue getting tested?
- Who will be coordinating my follow-up care? If someone other than my cancer care team - do they have experience with people who have finished cancer treatment?
- For what reasons should I contact my cancer care team? For what reasons should I contact my primary care team?



- How soon can I return to my usual activities like work, school, exercise, or other hobbies?
- What long-term side effects or late effects are possible based on the cancer treatment I received? What can be done about them?
- Do I need to take any special medications or follow a special diet?
- Do I need to be referred to a specialist?
- What is the risk of the cancer returning? What are the signs and symptoms I should watch for?
- What should I do if I notice one of these symptoms?
- What can I do to help lower my risk of the cancer coming back or developing another cancer?
- What other cancer screenings do I need?
- How can I get a treatment summary and survivorship care plan to keep in my personal records?
- Are there any support services or resources available to me? To my family?







For more information and answers, visit the American Cancer Society website at **cancer.org** or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.



[cancer.org](https://cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

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