



CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

For months, you've been looking forward to the end of your cancer treatment. That day has finally arrived, but as a cancer survivor, you have special concerns. Many are related to the life-saving treatments you've received. That's why it's important to work with your doctors to develop a Survivorship Care Plan. Such a plan can help prepare you for the physical and emotional issues that many people experience and help to make sure you receive the follow-up care you need to live a healthy, productive life.

WHAT IS A SURVIVORSHIP CARE PLAN?

A Survivorship Care Plan starts with a cancer treatment summary, which should include important information that you, your primary care doctor and other doctors will need to know. Ask the doctor who provided most of your cancer treatment to give you this summary. It will help you coordinate care between your primary care doctor and other specialists. Coordination is essential to ensure that your needs are being met.

The cancer treatment summary should include information such as:

- Background information about you, your risk factors and your cancer diagnosis;
 - A description of the treatments you received, dates of treatment, names of doctors who provided the different treatments and their contact information;
 - Information on follow-up care you should schedule in the future, including cancer screenings, and who should provide the care;
 - Possible effects of your cancer and treatment history that may be experienced months or years after treatment, including both physical and emotional issues;
 - When to call your doctor and which doctor to call (i.e., your oncologist or your primary care doctor);
 - Things you should do to be as healthy as possible;
 - Support resources available to you; and
 - Any special issues you may experience.
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PHYSICAL ISSUES OF CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

Your need for care doesn't end with active treatment of your cancer. In fact, because of your cancer treatments, your health care needs have probably changed, and you may face new challenges in the years ahead. Some—but not all—cancer survivors experience long-term, or "late effects," from their cancer or cancer treatment. This may include physical, mental and social problems or even second cancers. It can be difficult to predict if you will experience late effects and when they might occur. Your experience will depend on the type of cancer and treatments you had and any other health conditions you have. The effects may be mild or serious; they may improve or eventually go away. Your doctors may be able to tell you which effects you're more likely to experience, how to manage them and when to seek medical help.

Some individuals—such as many women with breast cancer—will continue to receive ongoing treatment. These women will receive drugs that can cause side effects, so they will need to be monitored over the long term. They also may experience some of the following long-term or late effects listed below.

EMOTIONAL ISSUES OF CANCER SURVIVORSHIP

You and other cancer survivors often experience a variety of emotions when treatment ends. There is the positive feeling of having gotten through a difficult time and knowing you will no longer be going in for treatment. You may have found strengths you didn't know you had. You may find yourself experiencing a renewed enthusiasm for getting the most out of each day.

You may also have other, sometimes confusing feelings. Some cancer survivors suddenly feel lost, abandoned and vulnerable because they aren't seeing the doctors and nurses who cared for them during treatment. Friends and family members may drift away once the



Possible long-term or late effects include:

- Fatigue
- Problems fighting infections
- Lymphedema, or swelling of arms or legs
- Memory loss or difficulty concentrating (sometimes referred to as “chemo brain”)
- Infertility
- Changes in sexual functioning
- Pain
- Numbness or tingling due to nerve damage
- Bone and joint problems
- Muscle weakness
- Lung or heart problems
- Another cancer
- Sensitivity to sun

critical treatment period is over. They may not understand that you still have concerns about how cancer has changed your life and need their support. Life can return to what used to be normal, but you don't feel like the same person, and normal doesn't feel the same either. If you've taken leave from your job, returning to work can be difficult. You may have concerns about the future and facing the challenge of adjusting to the new normal.

Acknowledging your feelings and concerns is an important first step. Since you may not want to burden your family, friends and coworkers, it can be very helpful to join a cancer survivors group that meets in person or online. If you're feeling anxious or depressed, you can consider seeing a counselor or therapist. You can ask your doctor for a referral, contact your Employee Assistance Program or contact organizations that assist cancer survivors for a referral to resources in your community.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For examples of a cancer treatment summary and Survivorship Care Plan, as well as information about staying healthy after cancer treatment, go to these sources:

American Society of Clinical Oncology: <http://www.cancer.net/survivorship>

The Cancer Support Community:
<http://www.cancersupportcommunity.org> or call 1-888-793-9355

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship:
<http://www.canceradvocacy.org>

Journey Forward: <http://journeyforward.org/patients/patients>

LIVESTRONG Foundation

The LIVESTRONG Care Plan is a free online tool to help you develop a personalized plan for post-treatment care. You can use it to work with your oncologist and primary health care provider.
<http://www.LIVESTRONGcareplan.org>

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT RESOURCES

American Cancer Society: <http://www.cancer.org> (search for 'survivorship') or call 1-800-227-2345

LIVESTRONG Foundation: <http://www.livestrong.org> (search for 'cancer survivorship') or call 1-855-220-7777

Cancer Care: <http://www.cancercares.org> or call 1-800-813-HOPE (4673)

Other cancer organizations, online or in your community

Your Employee Assistance Program