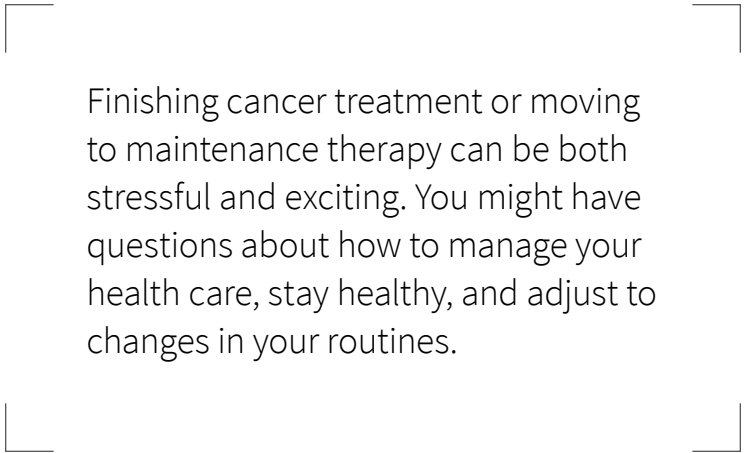




Preparing for Life After Cancer Treatment





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.

Most of the information in this booklet is for people nearing the end of cancer treatment when no maintenance therapy is planned.

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 get close to the end of treatment, you will likely have fewer visits with your cancer care team. Some people like making fewer trips to visit their cancer care team. Others may find they miss seeing their doctor or nurse to have their questions answered.

To help with this transition, ask your cancer doctor to give you a summary of the treatments you received. This summary will help as you talk about your cancer and treatment with your primary care provider, family doctor, or new members of your health care team.

Working with your cancer doctor, you can develop a survivorship care plan. A survivorship care plan might include information like how often you should have checkups, the type of tests you will need, 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/survivorshipcareplans](https://www.cancer.org/survivorshipcareplans) for more information and examples of survivorship care plans for different cancers.

Your treatment summary:

- Describes your cancer diagnosis
- Describes treatments you got or are still getting

- Helps you talk with health care professionals who were not part of your cancer care team
- Lists side effects you had or might still have

Your survivorship care plan:

- Should include a treatment summary
- Lists the follow-up appointments and tests you will need and when you should have them
- Describes things you can do to help you stay healthy
- Lists side effects of your treatment you may still be having, as well as late and long-term effects to watch for

Possible side effects of cancer treatment

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. Some might include:

- Fatigue
- Pain
- Problems fighting infection
- Lymphedema (swelling of arms or legs)
- 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

- Skin changes
- Second cancers
- Anemia

Talk to your cancer care team about what side effects 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
- 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 your health care team, social worker, counselor, or psychologist about any concerns you might have. Your health 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 and lifestyle after treatment

After finishing cancer treatment, there are things you can do to help lower the risk of the cancer returning or of a new cancer or other serious disease developing, and to improve your health.

- Stay away from all types of tobacco and tobacco smoke, including secondhand smoke.
- Avoid 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.
- Follow a healthy eating pattern. Eat plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables and whole grains. Limit or avoid red/processed meats, highly processed foods, and sugary foods and beverages.
- Protect your skin from ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun. Stay away from sun lamps and tanning beds.
- See your doctor and dentist for regular checkups.
- Get recommended cancer screening tests.

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?
- Who will be coordinating my follow-up care? Do they have experience with people who have finished cancer treatment?
- 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? Are there 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 screening tests do you recommend based on the treatments I had?
- How long will I need to continue getting screening tests?
- 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 cancer information, day-to-day help, and support, 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 | 1.800.227.2345

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