



After Adrenal Cancer Treatment

Living as a Cancer Survivor

For many people, cancer treatment often raises questions about next steps as a survivor.

- [Living as an Adrenal Cancer Survivor](#)

Cancer Concerns After Treatment

Treatment may remove or destroy the cancer, but it is very common to have questions about cancer coming back or treatment no longer working.

- [Second Cancers After Adrenal Cancer](#)

Living as an Adrenal Cancer Survivor

For some people with adrenal cancer, treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. The end of treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but it's hard not to worry about cancer [coming back](#). This is very common if you've had cancer.

For other people, the cancer might never go away completely. Some people may get [chemotherapy](#) or other treatments to try and help keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that does not go away can be difficult and very stressful.

Life after adrenal cancer means returning to some familiar things and making some new choices.

Follow-up care

Follow-up care will be very important after treatment for adrenal cancer. One reason for this is that the cancer can come back (recur), even after treatment for early-stage disease. Your doctor will want to see you frequently in the first months and years after treatment, but this might become less often as time goes on. This is a good time for you to talk to your cancer care team about any changes or problems you notice and any questions or concerns you have.

If you are still taking mitotane, your follow-up appointments may need to be more frequent to see if the mitotane levels in your blood are in a good range and if there are any side effects from this drug. Remember that mitotane will also suppress the usual adrenal steroid hormone production from your other, normal adrenal gland. As a result, you will need to take hormone replacement tablets to protect you against cortisol deficiency.

CT scans may be done periodically to see if the cancer has returned or is continuing to grow. Periodic tests of your blood and urine hormone levels will be done to evaluate the success of drugs in suppressing hormone production by the cancer.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#) for you. This plan might include:

- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests
- A schedule for other tests you might need in the future, such as [early detection \(screening\) tests](#) for other types of cancer, or tests to look for long-term health effects from your cancer or its treatment
- A list of possible late- or long-term side effects from your treatment, including what to watch for and when you should contact your doctor
- [Diet and physical activity](#) suggestions
- Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health care

Nutrition

Eating right can be hard for anyone, and may have gotten tougher during cancer treatment. The cancer, varying hormone levels, and your treatment can all affect how you eat and absorb nutrition. [Nausea](#) can be a problem during and after some treatments, and you may have lost your appetite and some weight.

If you have lost or are losing weight, or if you are having trouble eating, do the best you can. Eat what appeals to you. Eat what you can, when you can. You might find it helps to eat small portions every 2 to 3 hours until you feel better. Now is not the time to restrict your diet. Try to keep in mind that these problems usually improve over time. Your cancer team may refer you to a dietitian, an expert in nutrition who can give you ideas on how to fight some of the side effects of your treatment.

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep health insurance. Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and even though no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

At some point after your cancer treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who doesn't know about your medical history. It's important to keep copies of your medical records to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment. Learn more in [Keeping Copies of Important Medical Records](#).

Can I lower my risk of adrenal cancer progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) adrenal cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the cancer growing or coming back, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements. Unfortunately, since there are no known preventable risk factors for this cancer, it is not yet clear if there are things you can do that will keep it from coming back.

Tobacco use has been suggested as a risk factor for adrenal cancer by some researchers, so not smoking might help reduce your risk. We don't know for certain if this will help, but we do know that it can help improve your appetite and overall health. It can also reduce the chance of developing other types of cancer. If you want to quit smoking and need help, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. You can also learn more in our [Guide to Quitting Smoking](#).

About dietary supplements

So far, no [dietary supplements](#) (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have

been shown to clearly help lower the risk of cancer progressing or coming back. This doesn't mean that no supplements will help, but it's important to know that none have been proven to do so.

Dietary supplements are not regulated like medicines in the United States – they do not have to be proven effective (or even safe) before being sold, although there are limits on what they're allowed to claim they can do. If you're thinking about taking any type of nutritional supplement, talk to your health care team. They can help you decide which ones you can use safely while avoiding those that might be harmful.

If the cancer comes back

If the cancer does recur at some point, your treatment options will depend on where the cancer is located, what treatments you've had before, and your health. For more information on how recurrent cancer is treated, see [Treatment Choices by Type and Stage of Adrenal Cancer](#).

For more general information on recurrence, you may also want to see [Understanding Recurrence](#).

Could I get a second cancer after treatment?

People who've had adrenal cancer can still get other cancers. In fact, adrenal cancer survivors are at higher risk for getting some other types of cancer. Learn more in [Second Cancers After Adrenal Cancer](#).

- [References](#)

Kushi LH, Doyle C, McCullough M, Rock CL, Demark-Wahnefried W, Bandera EV, Gapstur S, Patel AV, Andrews K, Gansler T; American Cancer Society 2010 Nutrition and Physical Activity Guidelines Advisory Committee. American Cancer Society Guidelines on nutrition and physical activity for cancer prevention: reducing the risk of cancer with healthy food choices and physical activity. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. 2012 Jan-Feb;62(1):30-67.

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Second Cancers After Adrenal Cancer

Cancer survivors can be affected by a number of health problems, but often their greatest concern is facing cancer again. If a cancer comes back after treatment it is called a [recurrence](#). But some cancer survivors may develop a new, unrelated cancer later. This is called a second cancer. No matter what type of cancer you have had, it is still possible to get another (new) cancer, even after surviving the first.

Unfortunately, being treated for cancer doesn't mean you can't get another cancer. People who have had cancer can still get the same types of cancers that other people get. In fact, certain types of cancer and cancer treatments can be linked to a higher risk of certain second cancers.

Survivors of adrenal cancer can still get any type of second cancer, but they have increased risks of:

- [Lung cancer](#)
- [Bladder cancer](#)
- [Prostate cancer](#)

Women who have had adrenal cancer also have an increased risk of [melanoma of the skin](#).

Patients who were under 45 when adrenal cancer was diagnosed have increased risks of [breast cancer](#), [bone](#) and [soft tissue sarcoma](#), [brain tumors](#), and [acute leukemia](#). These cancers, along with adrenal cancer, are seen in a [family cancer syndrome](#) called Li-Fraumeni syndrome.

Follow-up after treatment

After completing treatment for adrenal cancer, you should still see your doctor regularly and may have tests to look for signs the cancer has come back or spread. Experts do not recommend any additional testing to look for second cancers in patients without

symptoms. Let your doctor know about any new symptoms or problems, because they could be caused by the cancer coming back or by a new disease or second cancer.

Survivors of adrenal cancer should follow the [American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer](#) and [stay away from tobacco products](#). Smoking increases the risk of many cancers.

To help maintain good health, survivors should also:

- Get to and stay at a [healthy weight](#)
- Adopt a [physically active lifestyle](#)
- Eat a [healthy diet](#), with an emphasis on plant foods
- Limit [alcohol](#) to no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men

These steps may also lower the risk of some cancers.

See [Second Cancers in Adults](#) for more information about causes of second cancers.

- [References](#)

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