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# After Bile Duct Cancer Treatment

## Living as a Bile Duct Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living as a Bile Duct Cancer Survivor](#)

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# Living as a Bile Duct Cancer Survivor

For some people with bile duct 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 regular treatment with chemotherapy or other treatments to try and help keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that doesn't go away can be difficult and very stressful.

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

## Follow-up care

If you have completed treatment, your doctors will still want to watch you closely. It's very important to go to all of your follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask questions about any problems you may have. They will examine you and may check lab tests or x-rays and scans to look for signs of cancer or treatment side effects.

Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some may last for a few weeks to months, but others can last the rest of your life. Talk to your cancer care team about any changes or problems you notice and about any questions or concerns you have.

There's no follow-up schedule for bile duct cancer for all doctors to follow. Many doctors recommend blood and/or [imaging tests](#)<sup>1</sup> about every 6 months for at least the first couple of years after treatment. Then your doctor will probably want to see you once a year.

If the cancer does come back (recur), further treatment will depend on where the cancer is, what treatments you've had before, and your overall health. For more on how recurrent bile duct cancer is treated, see [Treatment Options Based on the Extent of Bile Duct Cancer](#)<sup>2</sup>. For more general information on recurrence, see [Understanding Recurrence](#)<sup>3</sup>.

## Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#)<sup>4</sup> 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](#)<sup>5</sup> 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](#)<sup>6</sup> suggestions
- Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health care

## 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](#)<sup>7</sup>.

## Can I lower my risk of bile duct cancer progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) bile duct 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, it's not yet clear if there are things you can do that will help.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as [not smoking](#)<sup>8</sup>, [eating well](#)<sup>9</sup>, [getting regular physical activity](#)<sup>10</sup>, and [staying at a healthy weight](#)<sup>11</sup> might help, but no one knows for sure. Still, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your health that can extend beyond your risk of bile duct cancer or other cancers.

### About dietary supplements

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)<sup>12</sup> (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of bile duct 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 overall health. For more information on how recurrent cancer is treated, see [Treatment Options Based on the Extent of Bile Duct Cancer](#)<sup>13</sup>.

For more general information, you may also want to see [Understanding Recurrence](#)<sup>14</sup>.

## Getting emotional support

Some amount of feeling [depressed, anxious, or worried](#)<sup>15</sup> is normal when cancer is a part of your life. Some people are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from help and support from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others. Learn more in [Life After Cancer](#)<sup>16</sup>.

## Hyperlinks

1. [www.cancer.org/treatment/understanding-your-diagnosis/tests/imaging-radiology-tests-for-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/understanding-your-diagnosis/tests/imaging-radiology-tests-for-cancer.html)
2. [www.cancer.org/cancer/bile-duct-cancer/treating/based-on-situation.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/bile-duct-cancer/treating/based-on-situation.html)
3. [www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/understanding-recurrence.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/understanding-recurrence.html)
4. [www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/survivorship-care-plans.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/survivorship-care-plans.html)
5. [www.cancer.org/healthy/find-cancer-early/cancer-screening-guidelines/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/find-cancer-early/cancer-screening-guidelines/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html)
6. [www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active.html)
7. [www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/keeping-copies-of-important-medical-records.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/keeping-copies-of-important-medical-records.html)
8. [www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco.html)
9. [www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy.html)
10. [www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/get-active.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/get-active.html)
11. [www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/take-control-your-weight.html](http://www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/take-control-your-weight.html)
12. [www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html)
13. [www.cancer.org/cancer/bile-duct-cancer/treating/based-on-situation.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/bile-duct-cancer/treating/based-on-situation.html)
14. [www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/understanding-recurrence.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/understanding-recurrence.html)
15. [www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/emotional-mood-changes.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/emotional-mood-changes.html)
16. [www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html)

## References

Rock CL, Thomson C, Gansler T, et al. American Cancer Society guideline for diet and physical activity for cancer prevention. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. 2020;70(4). doi:10.3322/caac.21591. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21591> on June 9, 2020.

See all references for Bile Duct Cancer ([www.cancer.org/cancer/bile-duct-cancer/references.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/bile-duct-cancer/references.html))

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