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After Bone Cancer Treatment

Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living As a Bone Cancer Survivor](#)

Cancer Concerns After Treatment

Treatment may remove or destroy the cancer, but it is very common to be concerned about the risk of another cancer, the cancer coming back, or treatment no longer working.

- [Second Cancers After Bone Cancer](#)
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Living As a Bone Cancer Survivor

For some people with bone cancer, treatment may remove or destroy the cancer. Completing treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but find 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 targeted therapy 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 bone cancer means returning to some familiar things and also making some new choices.

Follow-up care

When treatment ends, 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 about any problems you might be having. Exams, lab tests, x-rays, and scans will be needed to look for signs that the cancer has come back. These may be done every 3 to 6 months for a few years. You'll see your doctor and have imaging scans quite often at first, but as time goes on there will be more time between scans and visits. Because primary bone tumors tend to come back, you may need to have imaging scans every year for many, many years.

Your doctor will also look for treatment [side effects](#)¹. Almost every cancer treatment has side effects. Some may last for a few weeks to months, but others can last the rest of your life. Now is the time for you to talk to your cancer care team about any changes or problems you notice and any questions or concerns you have.

After bone surgery, fitting for a prosthetic limb, rehabilitation, and/or physical therapy might be important to help you regain as much of your mobility and independence as possible.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#)² 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](#)³ 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

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](#)⁴.

Can I lower my risk of the bonecancer progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) primary bone 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](#)⁵, [eating well](#)⁶, [getting regular physical activity](#)⁷, and [staying at a healthy weight](#)⁸ might help, but no one knows for sure. Still, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your overall health beyond your risk of bonecancer or other cancers.

About dietary supplements

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)⁹ (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of bonecancer 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 come back (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 general information, see [Understanding Recurrence](#)¹⁰.

Could I get a second cancer after treatment?

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

Getting emotional support

Some amount of feeling depressed, anxious, or worried 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](#)¹¹.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects.html
2. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/survivorship-care-plans.html
3. www.cancer.org/healthy/find-cancer-early/cancer-screening-guidelines.html
4. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/keeping-copies-of-important-medical-records.html
5. www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco.html
6. www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/eat-healthy.html
7. www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/get-active.html
8. www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/take-control-your-weight.html
9. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/complementary-and-alternative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html
10. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/understanding-recurrence.html
11. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html

References

National Comprehensive Cancer Network. NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology. Bone Cancer. Version 1.2018 -- August 29, 2017.

See all references for Bone Cancer (www.cancer.org/cancer/bone-cancer/references.html)

Last Medical Review: November 28, 2017 Last Revised: February 5, 2018

Second Cancers After Bone 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's called a [recurrence](#)¹. But some cancer survivors develop a new, unrelated cancer later. This is called a **second cancer**.

Being treated for cancer doesn't mean you can't get another cancer, even after surviving the first one. 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 [bone and joint cancers](#)² can get any type of second cancer, but they have an increased risk of getting another bone or joint cancer (this is different from the first cancer coming back). Sometimes this is the same kind of cancer as the original tumor, but it can be a different type. For example, someone who had a [chondrosarcoma](#)³ can get an [osteosarcoma](#)⁴. [Sarcoma of the soft tissues](#)⁵ is also seen more often than expected after a cancer of the bone or joints.

Survivors of bone and joint cancers also have an increased risk of:

- [Lung cancer](#)⁶
- [Esophagus cancer](#)⁷
- [Stomach cancer](#)⁸
- [Colorectal cancer](#)⁹
- [Liver cancer](#)¹⁰

- [Pancreas cancer](#)¹¹
- [Acute myeloid leukemia \(AML\)](#)¹²

The risk of leukemia is linked to treatment with [chemotherapy](#)¹³.

Follow-up after treatment

After treatment for bone cancer, you should see your doctor regularly. You will need tests to look for signs that 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 bone cancer should follow the [American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer](#)¹⁴.

The Children's Oncology Group has guidelines for the follow-up of patients treated for cancer as a child, teen, or young adult, including screening for second cancers. These can be found at www.survivorshipguidelines.org¹⁵.

All cancer survivors should [stay away from tobacco products](#)¹⁶. Smoking increases the risk of many cancers and might further increase the risk of some of the second cancers seen after bone cancer.

To help [maintain good health](#)¹⁷, survivors should also:

- Get to and stay at a [healthy weight](#)¹⁸
- Keep [physically active](#)¹⁹ and limit the time you spend sitting or lying down
- Follow a [healthy eating pattern](#)²⁰ that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and limits or avoids red and processed meats, sugary drinks, and highly processed foods
- It's best not to drink [alcohol](#)²¹. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men

These steps may also help lower the risk of some cancers.

See [Second Cancers in Adults](#)²² for more information about the causes of second cancers.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/understanding-recurrence.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/bone-cancer/about.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/bone-cancer/about/what-is-bone-cancer.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/osteosarcoma.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/soft-tissue-sarcoma.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/lung-cancer.html
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12. www.cancer.org/cancer/acute-myeloid-leukemia.html
13. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/treatment-types/chemotherapy.html
14. www.cancer.org/healthy/find-cancer-early/cancer-screening-guidelines/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html
15. <http://www.survivorshipguidelines.org/>
16. www.cancer.org/healthy/stay-away-from-tobacco.html
17. www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active.html
18. www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/diet-physical-activity/body-weight-and-cancer-risk.html
19. www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/diet-physical-activity.html
20. www.cancer.org/healthy/eat-healthy-get-active/acs-guidelines-nutrition-physical-activity-cancer-prevention/guidelines.html
21. www.cancer.org/cancer/cancer-causes/diet-physical-activity/alcohol-use-and-cancer.html
22. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/second-cancers-in-adults.html

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Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

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