



# After Liver Cancer Treatment

## Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living as a Liver Cancer Survivor](#)
- [Lifestyle Changes After Liver Cancer](#)
- [Getting Emotional Support](#)

## Living as a Liver Cancer Survivor

Completing treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but find it hard not to worry about cancer growing or coming back. (When cancer comes back after treatment, it is called a [recurrence](#).) This is a very common concern in people who have had cancer.

It may take a while before your fears lessen. But it may help to know that many cancer survivors have learned to live with this uncertainty and are leading full lives.

For others, liver cancer may never go away completely. You may still get regular treatments to try to help keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that does not go away can be difficult and very stressful. It has its own type of uncertainty. Learn more in [Managing Cancer as a Chronic Illness](#).

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

## Follow-up care

Even after you have completed liver cancer treatment, your doctors will want to watch you closely. It is very important to go to all follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask you if you are having any problems, do physical exams and blood tests, such as alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) levels, liver function tests (LFTs). Imaging tests, such as ultrasound, CT, or MRI scans might also be ordered.

If you have been treated with a surgical resection or a liver transplant and have no signs of cancer remaining, most doctors recommend follow-up with [imaging tests](#) and blood tests every 3 to 6 months for the first 2 years, then every 6 to 12 months. Follow-up is needed to check for cancer recurrence or spread, as well as possible side effects of certain treatments.

Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some might only last a few weeks or months, but others can last a long time. . Don't hesitate to tell your cancer care team about any symptoms or side effects that bother you so they can help you manage them effectively.

It is important to keep health insurance. Health care costs a lot, and even though no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

## Follow-up after a liver transplant

A liver transplant can be very effective at treating the cancer and replacing a damaged liver. But this is a major procedure that requires intense follow-up after treatment. Along with monitoring your recovery from surgery and looking for possible signs of cancer recurrence, your medical team will watch you closely to make sure your body is not rejecting the new liver.

You will need to take strong medicines to help prevent the rejection. These medicines can have their own side effects, including weakening your immune system, which can

make you more likely to get [infections](#).

Your transplant team should tell you what to watch for in terms of symptoms and side effects and when you need to contact them. It is very important to follow their instructions closely.

## **Anti-viral treatment**

If you have hepatitis B or C that may have contributed to your liver cancer, your doctor may want to put you on medicines to treat or help control the infection.

## **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 diagnosis and treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who does not 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.

## **Can I lower my risk of liver cancer progressing or coming back?**

If you have (or have had) liver cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the cancer coming back, or of getting a new skin cancer.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as not smoking, eating well, being active, and staying at a healthy weight might help as well, but no one knows for sure. However, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your health that can extend beyond your risk of liver or other cancers.

- [References](#)

[See all references for Liver Cancer](#)

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our [Content Usage Policy](#).

## Lifestyle Changes After Liver Cancer

You can't change the fact that you have had cancer. What you can change is how you live the rest of your life – making choices to help you stay healthy and feel as well as you can. This can be a time to look at your life in new ways. Maybe you are thinking about how to improve your health over the long term. Some people even start during cancer treatment.

### Eating better

Eating right can be hard for anyone, but it can get even tougher during and after cancer treatment. Treatment may change your sense of taste. Nausea can be a problem. You may not feel like eating and lose weight when you don't want to. Or you may have gained weight that you can't seem to lose. All of these things can be very frustrating.

Keep in mind that these problems usually get better over time.

One of the best things you can do after cancer treatment is to start healthy eating habits. Learn more in [Nutrition and Physical Activity During and After Cancer Treatment: Answers to Common Questions](#).

### Exercise

Studies have shown that patients who follow an exercise program tailored to their personal needs feel better physically and emotionally and can cope better, too.

If you were sick and not very active during treatment, it is normal for your fitness, endurance, and muscle strength to decline. Any physical activity plan should fit your situation. A person who has never exercised will not be able to take on the same amount of exercise as someone who plays tennis twice a week. If you haven't exercised in a few years, you will have to start slowly – maybe just by taking short walks.

## If the cancer comes back

If liver cancer does come back at some point, your treatment options will depend on where the cancer is, what treatments you've had before, and your overall health. For more on how recurrent cancer is treated, see [Treatment of liver cancer, by stage](#). For more general information on dealing with a recurrence, you might also want to read [Coping With Cancer Recurrence](#).

- [References](#)

[See all references for Liver Cancer](#)

Last Medical Review: March 31, 2016 Last Revised: April 28, 2016

---

---

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our [Content Usage Policy](#).

## Getting Emotional Support

Some amount of feeling depressed, anxious, or worried is normal when liver 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 [Coping with Cancer or Distress in People with Cancer](#).

- [References](#)

[See all references for Liver Cancer](#)

Last Medical Review: March 31, 2016 Last Revised: April 28, 2016

---

---

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our [Content Usage Policy](#).

**2016 Copyright American Cancer Society**

For additional assistance please contact your American Cancer Society  
1-800-227-2345 or [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)