



# After Treatment for Osteosarcoma

## Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [What Happens After Treatment for Osteosarcoma?](#)
- [Keeping Good Medical Records](#)
- [Social, Emotional, and Other Issues in People With Osteosarcoma](#)

## Cancer Concerns After Treatment

Osteosarcoma survivors are at risk for possible late effects of their cancer treatment. It's important to discuss what these possible effects might be with your medical team so you know what to watch for and report to the doctor.

- [Late and Long-Term Effects of Treatment for Osteosarcoma](#)

# What Happens After Treatment for Osteosarcoma?

Following [treatment](#) for osteosarcoma, the main concerns for most people are the short- and long-term effects of the cancer and its treatment, and concerns about the cancer coming back.

It's certainly normal to want to put the tumor and its treatment behind you and to get back to a life that doesn't revolve around cancer. But it's important to realize that follow-up care is a central part of this process that offers you (or your child) the best chance for recovery and long-term survival.

## Follow-up care

After treatment is over, it's very important to go to all follow-up appointments. During these visits, doctors will ask about symptoms, do physical exams, and may order blood tests or imaging tests such as CT scans or x-rays. Follow-up visits are needed to check for cancer recurrence or spread, as well as possible side effects of treatment. This is the time for you to ask the health care team any questions you need answered and to discuss any concerns you might have.

You or your child will probably see the oncologist and the orthopedic surgeon and get imaging tests every few months during the couple of years after treatment, and less often after that if there are no issues.

Physical therapy and rehabilitation is typically a very important part of recovery after treatment for osteosarcoma, and your doctors and other health providers will continue to monitor your (child's) progress as time goes on.

Some chemotherapy drugs can cause problems with hearing or heart damage. People who get these drugs may also have audiograms to check hearing or tests to check heart function.

Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some may last for weeks or months, but [others can last longer](#) or might not show up until months or even years later. Tell the cancer care team about any symptoms or side effects so they can help manage them.

- [References](#)

[See all references for Osteosarcoma](#)

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## Keeping Good Medical Records

As much as you may want to put the experience behind you once [treatment](#) is

completed, it is also very important to keep good records of your (child's) medical care during this time. Gathering these details soon after treatment may be easier than trying to get them at some point in the future. This can be very helpful later on if you (or your child) change doctors. Be sure the doctors have the following information, and always keep copies for yourself:

- A copy of the pathology report(s) from any biopsies or surgeries
- Copies of imaging tests (CT or MRI scans, etc.), which can usually be stored digitally (on a DVD, etc.)
- If there was surgery, a copy of the operative report(s)
- If you (or your child) stayed in the hospital, copies of the discharge summaries that doctors prepare when patients are sent home
- If chemo was given, a list of the drugs, drug doses, and when they were given
- If radiation therapy was given, a summary of the type and dose of radiation and when and where it was given

It's also very important to keep [health insurance coverage](#). Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and even though no one wants to think of the tumor coming back, this could happen.

- [References](#)

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## **Social, Emotional, and Other Issues in People With Osteosarcoma**

Social and emotional issues may come up during and after treatment. Factors such as the person's age when diagnosed and the extent of treatment can play a role in this.

Most osteosarcomas develop during the teenage or young adult years, a very sensitive time in a person's life. Osteosarcoma and its treatment can have a profound effect on how a person looks and how they view themselves and their body. It can also affect

how they do some everyday tasks, including certain school, work, or recreational activities. These effects are often greatest during the first year of treatment, but they can be long-lasting in some people. It's important that the treating center assess the family situation as soon as possible, so that any areas of concern can be addressed.

Some children and teens may have emotional or psychological issues that need to be addressed during and after treatment. Depending on their age, they may also have some problems with normal functioning and school work. These can often be overcome with support and encouragement. Doctors and other members of the health care team can also often recommend special support programs and services to help after treatment.

Cancer care teams usually recommend that school-age children and teens attend school as much as possible. This can help them maintain a sense of daily routine and keep their friends informed about what is going on.

Friends can be a great source of support, but patients and parents should know that some people have misunderstandings and fears about cancer. Some cancer centers have a school re-entry program that can help in situations like this. In this program, health educators visit the school and tell students about the diagnosis, treatment, and changes the person may go through. They also answer any questions from teachers and classmates. (For more information, see our document [Children Diagnosed With Cancer: Returning to School.](#))

Centers that treat many patients with osteosarcoma might have programs to introduce new patients to others who have already finished treatment. This can give patients an idea of what to expect during and after treatment, which is very important. Seeing another person with osteosarcoma doing well is often helpful. There are also support groups that encourage athletics and full use of the limbs. Many amputees or people with prostheses are able to take part in athletics and often do.

Parents and other family members can also be affected, both emotionally and in other ways. Some common family concerns during treatment include financial stresses, traveling to and staying near the cancer center, the possible loss of a job, and the need for home schooling. Social workers and other professionals at cancer centers can help families sort through these issues.

During treatment, patients and their families tend to focus on the daily aspects of getting through it and beating the cancer. But once treatment is finished, a number of emotional concerns can arise. Some of these might last a long time. They can include things like:

- Dealing with physical changes that can result from the treatment

- Worrying about the cancer returning or new health problems developing
- Feeling resentful for having had cancer or having to go through treatment when others do not
- Worrying about being treated differently or discriminated against (by friends, classmates, coworkers, employers, etc.)
- Being concerned about dating, marrying, and having a family later in life

No one chooses to have osteosarcoma, but for many people, the experience can eventually be positive, helping to establish strong self-values. Other people may have a harder time recovering, adjusting to life after cancer, and moving on. It is normal to have some anxiety or other emotional reactions after treatment, but feeling overly worried, depressed, or angry can affect many parts of a young person's growth. It can get in the way of relationships, school, work, and other aspects of life.

With support from family, friends, other survivors, mental health professionals, and others, many people who have survived cancer can thrive in spite of the challenges they've had to face. If needed, doctors and other members of the health care team can often recommend special support programs and services to help after cancer treatment.

Although the psychological impact of this disease on children and teens is most obvious, adults with this disease face many of the same challenges. They should also be encouraged to take advantage of the cancer center's physical therapy, occupational therapy, and counseling services.

- [References](#)

[See all references for Osteosarcoma](#)

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## Late and Long-Term Effects of Treatment for Osteosarcoma

More young people with osteosarcoma are now surviving this cancer. But the treatment may affect their health later in life, so watching for health effects as they get older has

become more of a concern in recent years.

Just as the treatment of cancer in young people requires a very specialized approach, so does their [care and follow-up after treatment](#). The earlier any problems are recognized, the more likely it is they can be treated effectively.

Young people with cancer are at risk, to some degree, for several possible late effects of their cancer treatment. This risk depends on a number of factors, such as the type of cancer, the specific cancer treatments they received, doses of cancer treatment, and age when receiving treatment.

For example, as described in the [Surgery for Osteosarcoma](#) section, the after-effects of surgery can range from small scars to the loss of a limb, which would require both physical rehabilitation and emotional adjustment.

Other late effects of cancer treatment can include:

- Heart or lung problems (due to certain chemo drugs or radiation therapy to the chest)
- Loss of hearing (due to certain chemo drugs)
- Slowed or decreased growth and development (in the bones or overall)
- Changes in sexual development and ability to have children (see below)
- Learning problems in younger children
- Development of second cancers (see below)

There may be other possible complications from treatment as well. Your child's doctor should carefully review any possible problems with you before your child starts treatment.

Along with physical side effects, some childhood cancer survivors may have [emotional or psychological issues](#). They also may have problems with normal functioning and school work. These can often be addressed with support and encouragement. Doctors and other members of the health care team can also often recommend special support programs and services to help children after cancer treatment.

## **Fertility issues**

Fertility problems are not common after osteosarcoma treatment, but they can occur. Older girls and women may have changes in menstrual periods during chemotherapy, but normal monthly cycles usually return after treatment ends. Boys and men may lose the ability to make sperm. This usually returns, but the sperm count may remain low. Radiation to the pelvis can also damage reproductive organs, which could affect fertility.

Talk to your (or your child's) cancer care team about the risks of infertility before treatment, and ask if there are options for preserving fertility, such as sperm banking. For more information, see our documents [Fertility and Women With Cancer](#) or [Fertility and Men With Cancer](#).

## Development of a second cancer

Rarely, some types of chemotherapy can cause a second type of cancer (such as [leukemia](#)), years after the osteosarcoma is cured. Radiation therapy can also raise the risk of a new cancer at the site of the treatment. But the importance of treating the osteosarcoma generally far outweighs this small risk. For more information on second cancers, see our document [Second Cancers in Adults](#).

## Long-term follow-up care for children and teens

To help increase awareness of late effects and improve follow-up care of childhood cancer survivors throughout their lives, the Children's Oncology Group (COG) has developed long-term follow-up guidelines for survivors of childhood cancers. These guidelines can help you know what to watch for, what types of screening tests should be done to look for problems, and how late effects are treated.

It's very important to discuss possible long-term complications with your child's health care team, and to make sure there is a plan in place to watch for these problems and treat them, if needed. To learn more, ask your child's doctors about the COG survivor guidelines. You can also download them for free at the COG website: [www-survivorshipguidelines.org](http://www-survivorshipguidelines.org). The guidelines are written for health care professionals. Patient versions of some of the guidelines are available (as "Health Links") on the site as well, but we urge you to discuss them with a doctor.

For more about some of the possible long-term effects of treatment, see the document [Children Diagnosed With Cancer: Late Effects of Cancer Treatment](#).

- [References](#)

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