

## How about your emotional health?

Once your treatment ends, you may find yourself filled with emotions. This happens to a lot of people. You may have been going through so much during treatment that you could only focus on getting through your treatment.

Now you may find that you think about your own death or the effect of your cancer on your family. You may also begin to think about your relationship with your spouse or partner.

This is a time when you need people you can turn to for strength and comfort. This support can come from family, friends, cancer support groups, church groups, online support groups, or counselors.

Almost everyone who has been through cancer can feel better from getting some type of support. What's best for you depends on you. Some people feel safe in groups, and others would rather talk in an informal setting, such as church. Others may feel more at ease talking with a close friend or counselor. Whatever your source of strength or comfort, make sure you have a place to go with your concerns.

The cancer journey can feel very lonely. You don't need to go it alone. Your friends and family may feel shut out if you decide not to include them. Let them in – and let in those who you feel may help.

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 healthy choices and feeling as well as possible.

For more information, please visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

# Moving on after Treatment

Completing treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You will be relieved to finish treatment, yet it is hard not to worry about cancer coming back. This is a very common concern among people who have had cancer.



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For years after treatment ends, you will need to see your doctor for follow-up. These visits may include a physical and blood tests, which can help to tell if the cancer has come back. Other tests, such as chest x-rays and CT or MRI scans, may also be needed if anything suggests that the cancer has returned.

Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some may last for a few weeks to months, but others can last longer. Be sure to tell your doctor about any symptoms or side effects that bother you so he or she can help you with them.

## Seeing a new doctor

At some point after your cancer diagnosis and treatment, you may find yourself in the office of a new doctor. You will want to give your new doctor the exact details of your cancer. Make sure you have this information handy, and keep copies of all your medical records for yourself:

- A copy of your pathology report from any biopsy or surgery
- If you had surgery, a copy of your operative report

- If you were in the hospital, a copy of the discharge summary that every doctor must prepare when patients are sent home
- If you had radiation, a final summary of the dose and field
- If you had chemotherapy, a list of your drugs, drug doses, and when you took them
- A list of all medications that you are on now

## Lifestyle changes during and after treatment

Having cancer and dealing with treatment can take a lot of your time. But this can also 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 begin this during cancer treatment.

## Making healthy choices

Congratulations. You have gone through a rigorous, tiresome treatment and come out on top. You may find that some people may point out how you may have smoked, drunk too much, eaten unwisely, or didn't get regular exercise in the past. You may find this irritating, and you may feel a sense of guilt. If you prepare yourself to cope with this, you may be able to laugh it off. At the same time, it would be unwise to fall back to any unwise way of life of the past. Here are some tips to help you to preserve the precious life that you fought so hard to get back.

## Eating healthy

Eating right can be hard to do during and after cancer treatment. For instance, treatment may change your sense of taste. You may have a sick stomach. You may not feel like eating. You may even lose weight when you don't want to. On the other hand, some people gain weight even without eating more. This can be upsetting, too.

If you are losing weight or have taste problems during treatment, do the best you can with eating and know that these problems will get better. You may want to ask your doctor or nurse to see a dietitian who can give you ideas about how to deal with some of the side effects of your treatment. You may also find it helps to eat small portions every 2 to 3 hours until you feel better.

One of the best things you can do after treatment is put healthy eating habits into place. Try to eat 5 or more servings of vegetables and fruits each day. Choose whole-grain foods instead of white flour and sugars. Try to limit meats that are high in fat. Cut back on processed meats like sausages, salami, and bacon. If you drink alcohol, limit yourself to 1 or 2 drinks a day at the most. And don't forget to get some type of regular exercise. A good diet and regular exercise will help you maintain a healthy weight and give you more energy.

## Rest, fatigue, work, and exercise

Fatigue is very common in people being treated for cancer. This is not the same as the tiredness you might have at the end of a very busy day. It is a "bone-weary" feeling that doesn't get better with rest. For some, this fatigue lasts a long time after treatment, and can keep them from being active.

Being active, though, can help reduce your fatigue. Studies have shown that patients who follow an exercise program feel better and can cope better.

If you are sick and need to be on bed rest during treatment, it is normal to expect to lose some of your fitness, endurance, and muscle strength. Physical therapy can help you keep your muscles strong, which can help fight fatigue. It can also help the depressed feeling that sometimes comes with being so tired.

Your exercise program should fit your needs. An older person who has never been very active may not be able to do the same amount of exercise as a 20-year-old. If you haven't been active in a few years but can still get around, you may want to think about starting with short walks.

Talk with your doctor or nurse before starting. Let them know about your plans. And try to find an exercise buddy so that you're not doing it alone. Having family or friends involved when starting a new exercise program can give you that extra boost of support to keep you going when the push just isn't there. If you are very tired, though, you will need to be sure you get some rest. It is hard for some people to allow themselves to rest when they are used to working all day or taking care of a home and family. It is OK to rest when you need to.

Exercise can improve your health.

- It improves your heart and circulation.
- It makes your muscles stronger.
- It helps fatigue.
- It lowers anxiety and depression.
- It makes you feel happier.
- It helps you feel better about yourself.

And we know that exercise plays a role in stopping some cancers. The American Cancer Society says adults should take part in some type of physical activity for 30 minutes or more on 5 or more days of the week. Children and teens should try for at least 60 minutes a day of physical activity on at least 5 days a week.