



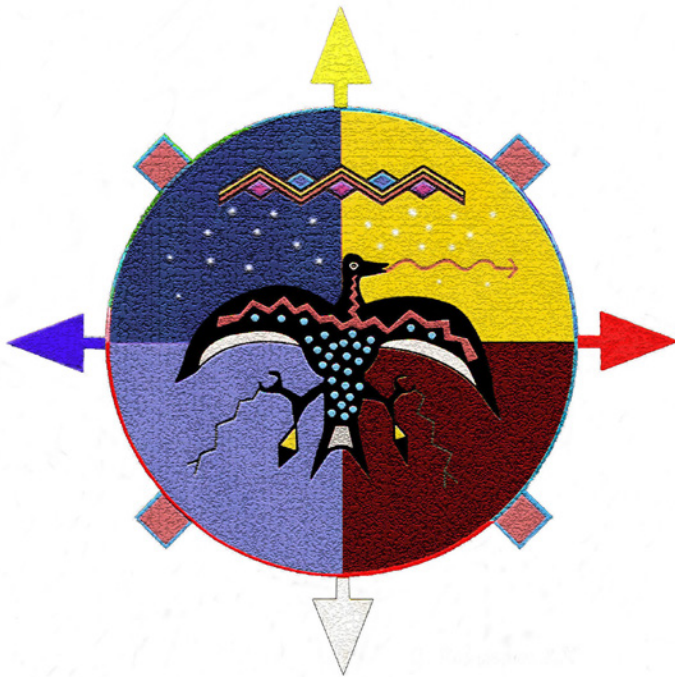
Life after Treatment

The Next Chapter in the
Survivorship Journey

A Guide for American Indians and Alaska Natives



At the end of cancer treatment, there may be questions about what lies ahead. There are many different types of support resources available that can help. This guide contains information that cancer survivors and their families can use to discuss life after treatment with their health care providers.



"I was afraid and not prepared. Everyone said it would be fine, but it was not very reassuring. I was terrified. I got so familiar with people at the health care provider's office, and then I realized I would not see them anymore."

Treatment Summary and Survivorship Care Plan

Cancer survivors work with a team of health care providers during cancer treatment. As the end of treatment nears, there will be fewer visits with this cancer care team. Some people look forward to making fewer trips to visit the cancer care team, while others may feel lost and alone without a health care provider. To help make this change easier, cancer survivors should ask their cancer specialist (or oncologist) to provide a summary of treatments received. This summary will be helpful when survivors seek care from other health care providers after treatment, such as primary care providers or a family health care provider. A survivorship care plan can be developed by the cancer survivor, cancer specialist (oncologist), and health care provider who will provide care after treatment. Visit the American Cancer Society's website at www.cancer.org/survivorshipcareplans for a list of organizations that provide survivorship care plans.

Treatment Summary

- Describes the cancer diagnosis
- Describes past or current medical treatments received for their cancer
- Provides a guide for cancer survivors to talk with health care providers who are not a part of the cancer care team
- Provides a record of cancer treatments

Survivorship Care Plan

- Should include a treatment summary
- Describes what follow-up appointments and tests survivors will need and when they should have them
- Describes ways that can help cancer survivors stay well
- Describes possible side effects of cancer treatment and ways to manage them
- Describes ways to manage physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual health



"I received information from my health care provider on side effects, and it made me realize what I was experiencing was normal."

Side Effects of Cancer Treatment

Physical Issues

Even after cancer treatment ends, there may be some physical side effects. The kind of side effects and how long they last will depend on the treatment received. By being aware of the common side effects of cancer treatment, cancer survivors can work with their health care provider to help treat them. Side effects might include:

- Fatigue or tiredness
- Pain
- Problems fighting infection
- Lymphedema (swelling of the arms or legs)
- Memory loss or trouble concentrating
- Changes in sexual function or fertility
- Nerve problems such as numbness and tingling
- Bone and joint problems or muscle weakness
- Skin changes
- A different cancer that happens due to treatment
- Anemia or low red cell blood counts that can cause tiredness

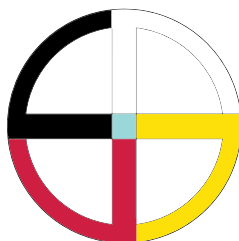
Emotional and Mental Issues

Cancer affects much more than just physical health. There is often stress along with a cancer experience, and it does not always end when treatment ends. In fact, those feelings may increase for some people after treatment. Areas of concern may include:

- Going back to work after a long time away
- Dealing with financial concerns
- Rebuilding relationships with family and friends
- Establishing a new “normal” and returning to day-to-day life
- Feeling uncertain about the future
- Coping with fears of cancer returning

Spiritual Issues

Taking care of spiritual health is very important. Working with a traditional healer can help restore balance during and after treatment. Consulting with a pastor or priest can also help with achieving a sense of well-being. Some people may find that combining these practices works well for them. Others may find that creating their own belief system adds to their sense of well-being.



Managing Health and Wellness after Treatment

After treatment is over, there are a number of things that can be done to stay healthy and reduce the risk for heart attack, stroke, diabetes, and even other cancers.

- Avoid using tobacco products such as cigarettes, chewing tobacco, or cigars.
- If you drink, limit the number of alcoholic beverages to no more than 1 drink a day for women and 2 drinks per day for men.
- Be physically active to help stay healthy, and take care of your mental, emotional, and spiritual health.
- Eat a healthy diet with more fruits and vegetables and less red and processed meats (such as bologna and hot dogs).



“At first I was hesitant to begin exercising again, but it was reassuring to learn I could resume at my own pace.”

- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Protect skin from exposure to ultraviolet radiation from the sun, sunlamps, and tanning beds.
- See a health care provider and dentist for regular checkups.

The American Cancer Society has nutrition and physical activity guidelines specific to the needs of cancer survivors during and after treatment. Visit www.cancer.org/treatment and click on the “Survivorship: During and After Cancer Treatment” link for more information.

There may be a number of questions that you want to ask your health care provider, or that you want to read about online. Keep track of these questions and the answers you find in the following spaces, and share them with your health care provider at your next visit.

Question:
1.
2.
3.

Cancer Information Resources

Sometimes people may find help by talking about their concerns with others who have had cancer, while others may want to keep their concerns to themselves. Online, phone, and face-to-face support is available. More information on support services can be found by calling any of the following trusted cancer organizations or by visiting their websites.



"It's important for me to share what I experienced. I'm so passionate about this because someone took my hand and walked me through it. I'd like to take someone else's hand."

American Cancer Society

The American Cancer Society provides support before, during, and after a cancer diagnosis. To get answers to your questions about cancer or to learn about programs and resources to help you get well and stay well, visit www.cancer.org or call 1-800-227-2345, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

The Survivorship Center

Visit www.cancer.org/survivorshipcenter for post-treatment survivorship resources.

Circle Of LifeSM

Visit www.cancer.org/col for information about taking care of mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

Native American Cancer Research

Visit www.natamcancer.org/naces for survivorship and quality-of-life information.

National Cancer Institute

The National Cancer Institute has information and resources to help answer questions about life after treatment. To talk with a trained information specialist, call 1-800-422-6237, or visit www.cancer.gov for more information.

LIVESTRONG

Visit www.livestrong.org to get information about support programs for cancer survivors. You can also fill out and print your own survivorship care plan.

Cancer Support Community

Visit www.cancersupportcommunity.org to view cancer survivorship information and resources.

National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship

Teamwork: The Cancer Patient's Guide to Talking with Your Doctor is a resource you can download that includes information about life after cancer treatment ends. Visit www.canceradvocacy.org to listen to survivor stories and to order resources.

CancerCare

Visit www.cancercare.org to learn about free emotional and practical support for people with cancer, caregivers, loved ones, and the bereaved.

Survivorship A to Z

Visit www.survivorshipatoz.org/cancer to find practical, financial, and legal information that can help after a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

Patient Advocate Foundation

Visit www.patientadvocate.org to find out about services offered to assist you with insurance and related issues.

Tips for Finding Trusted Information

The listing above represents a few organizations involved in the fight against cancer. While visiting other sites, the following tips may help you with sorting through the information to determine if it is current, correct, and right for you.

- **Who is providing the information?**

Often, the most trusted information sources are government agencies, hospitals, universities, and cancer-focused organizations. They typically have web addresses that end in .org, .edu, and .gov.

- **When was the information last updated?**

Health information is always changing, so look for the most current information possible. Web pages should include the date the information was posted or updated, and booklets and brochures should have the date they were printed inside the front cover or on the back page.

- **Whom is the information written for?**

Use websites that are written for cancer survivors, which are easy to read and understand, rather than

websites for doctors, nurses, or other health care professionals.

- **Does the resource list its purpose?**

Look for websites that inform visitors about a specific topic, and avoid those that promote or sell products. They may have biased or incorrect health information.

- **Is an author or source listed?**

Try to find the name of the author or the source of the information, and whether they are an expert on the topic. Trustworthy websites often list the source of supporting information from scientific journals.

- **Is the information balanced or unbiased?**

Information should be balanced, giving the good and bad of a topic. Having more than one viewpoint suggests an unbiased resource. Expert opinions should be supported by scientific evidence.

The Survivorship Center

The National Cancer Survivorship Resource Center (The Survivorship Center) is a collaboration between the American Cancer Society and The George Washington University Cancer Institute, funded by a 5-year cooperative agreement from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (cooperative agreement #5U55DP003054). It addresses the needs of those living with, through, and beyond cancer. Visit www.cancer.org/survivorshipcenter for more information.



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