

Cancer survivorship and life after cancer

June 13 2023, by Laurel Kelly



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One in two men and one in three women in the U.S. will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime, and more than 18 million cancer survivors are alive today, according to the American Cancer Society.

Cancer is the second-leading cause of death in the world. Survival rates

are improving for many types of cancer, though, thanks to improvements in [cancer screening](#), treatment and prevention.

Many cancer treatments take a toll, though, in the form of side effects and permanent changes. As a [cancer survivor](#), here are some things to consider.

Improve your long-term health

Beyond your initial recovery, you can take steps to improve your [long-term health](#) so that you can enjoy the years ahead as a cancer survivor.

The healthy living recommendations for cancer survivors are the same as the recommendations for anyone else:

- Exercise.
- Eat a balanced diet.
- Maintain a healthy weight.
- Get good sleep.
- Reduce stress.
- Avoid tobacco.
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink.

These healthy lifestyle strategies can improve your sense of well-being, enhance your quality of life and smooth your transition into survivorship.

Managing your emotions after cancer treatment

As a cancer survivor, you may have mixed emotions about completing your treatment plan. Though you, your friends and your family are all eager to return to a more normal life, it can be scary to leave the protective cocoon of health care professionals who supported you

through treatment.

Fear of recurrence is common among cancer survivors. Though they may go years without any sign of disease, [cancer survivors](#) say the thought of recurrence is always with them. You might worry that every ache or pain is a sign of your cancer recurring.

Lingering feelings of sadness and anger can interfere with your daily life. Feeling as if others can't understand what you've been through can lead to loneliness, and the urge to make up for lost time can cause stress.

All of these feelings are normal and common. Recovering from [cancer treatment](#) isn't just about your body. It's also about healing your mind.

Late side effects of cancer treatment

As more people are living longer after cancer treatment, more is becoming known about late side effects of cancer treatment. These are side effects of cancer treatment that become apparent after your treatment has ended.

Late effects of cancer treatment can come from any of the main types of cancer treatment: chemotherapy, [radiation therapy](#), surgery, [hormone therapy](#), immunotherapy and targeted therapy.

Cancer survivors might experience late effects of cancer treatment years later. Not everyone who has cancer treatment gets each of the late effects, and some people might not experience any late effects of treatment. It isn't clear whether late effects are preventable or why some people might experience late effects while others don't.

Life after cancer

A [cancer diagnosis](#) can change your life forever. It's important to remember that each person finds their own way of coping with the emotional and physical changes cancer brings.

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