

Life After Cancer

When you have finished cancer treatment, your life changes again. You may find it impossible to go back to your life “before cancer.” Some call this the “new normal.” You will need time to adjust. So will the people in your support system. This sheet lists some things to think about during this time of change.



Planning ahead

It is important to have a plan for your health. Ask your cancer care team for copies of your:

- Cancer treatment history
- Follow-up care plan

Use these plans as guides for staying healthy. Be sure to share them with all of your health care providers.



Write down some things you want to do now that you have finished cancer treatment.

Dealing with change

Physical changes: You may notice changes in how you feel, the way you look, or your abilities. People have different long-term treatment effects and heal at different rates. Be sure to talk with your care team about any questions or worries you have.

New emotions: Your experience with cancer may change your outlook on life. Give yourself time to cope with new feelings about the topics below.

- **Relationship with your spouse or partners.** Physical changes can affect how you see yourself. You may need time or reassurance before being intimate. Your partner may need time to adjust to your new physical and emotional state. Remember that both of you are coping with change and the feelings that come along with it.
- **Relationship with friends and co-workers.** After focusing on treatment for a long time, you may feel distant from friends or co-workers. You can choose when and how you get close to them again.
- **Pace of life.** Your “new normal” may feel like a slower pace than you expected. You may not be able to do everything you want to. It takes time to adjust to a new routine.
- **Future plans.** You may feel anxious about cancer coming back. Maybe you are anxious about going back to work or re-starting activities you enjoyed before cancer. It is normal to have these concerns.



Ways to cope

As you adjust to your “new normal,” try:

Talking about how you feel

- Share with your spouse or partner, and listen to how they feel.
- Update your friends and co-workers. They may be worried but not want to bother you.

Being active

- Even a small amount of physical activity can help your mood.
- Plan out what you want to do. Get important things done when you feel your best.

Connecting with other cancer survivors

- There are lots of ways to connect with other cancer survivors: in person, by phone, or online.
- Explore cancer survivorship resources at:
www.cancer.gov
 or call 1-800-422-6237
www.cancer.org
 or call 1-800-227-2345



Think about helping others with cancer

- Share your story at a cancer support group.
- Join your cancer center’s patient advisory council.
- Volunteer for a cancer-related organization or activity.



Write down the names of people that you want to be part of your “new normal.”



Write down what is most important to you at this time.

What gives you hope?

What brings meaning to your life?
