



# Follow-up care after cancer treatment



## What is follow-up care?

After you finish your cancer treatment, you will keep seeing your doctor for "follow-up care," where they will:

- Watch for signs of the cancer coming back (recurrence)
- Help you cope with any side effects from treatment
- Check your general health



## Planning your follow-up care

**You and your doctor will work together** to make a follow-up plan just for you. Your follow-up plan will guide your health care for the months and years after treatment.

### It is based on:

- The medical guidelines for your type and stage of cancer
- Your needs and wishes



## Who will I see for follow-up care?

After your treatment ends, you might see the doctor who treated you for cancer, your family doctor, or another health care professional.

### Who you see depends on:

- Your type and stage of cancer
- Any side effects you have
- Your health insurance rules
- Your personal wishes

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# What happens during follow-up care?

## Your doctor watches for cancer coming back

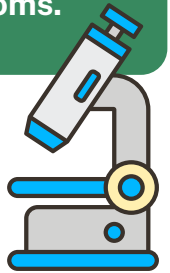
Your doctor will check for cancer that comes back after treatment (recurrence). Your doctor will also tell you what signs and symptoms to watch for.

The chance that a cancer will come back, and when and where, depends on the type you had and other factors.



No doctor can be sure if your cancer will come back or not. But a doctor who knows your medical history can talk with you about the chances and suggest ways to lower them.

Cancer can come back when very small areas of cancer cells are still in the body and can't be seen on tests. **These cells may grow until they show up on tests or cause symptoms.**



## Your doctor watches for second cancer

A second cancer is a new cancer that happens in someone who has had cancer before. It is a different type of cancer than the cancer that you had first. Your chances of having a second cancer depends on many factors.

### To watch for second cancer, your doctor may:

- Ask specific questions about your health
- Tell you which signs to watch for
- Give you blood tests or imaging tests. Testing will depend on:
  - The type and stage of cancer you had first
  - The treatment you had
  - If research shows testing could improve your health or help you live longer

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Side effects of cancer and cancer treatment can include physical and emotional changes.

You may be surprised to have side effects:

- That continue after treatment – called long-term side effects
- That may not happen until months or even years after your treatment ends – called **late effects**

Your chances of getting these types of side effects after treatment depend on:

- The type of cancer you had
- The treatment you had
- Your overall health

Ask your doctor which tests are right for you.

**Ask your doctor if your cancer treatment is known to cause late effects.**

If so, your follow-up care might include certain tests, such as:

- **A yearly thyroid exam** if you had radiation to your head, neck, or throat
- **Lung function tests** if you got a drug called bleomycin (Blenoxane) or had a bone marrow (stem cell) transplant. Lung function tests show how much air your lungs can hold and how quickly air moves in and out of them.
- **Regular electrocardiograms (EKGs)** if you had radiation to your chest, or if you had chemotherapy drugs that can affect how your heart works
- **Regular mammograms** if you had radiation to your chest
- **Blood tests or imaging tests** to check for signs of cancer coming back, such as X-rays or CT scans (computed tomography)



## Keeping your medical records

**Keeping your medical records together is important because:**

- All doctors who will care for you during your life will need to know about your cancer diagnosis and your treatment
- Your primary care doctor will need to know about your treatments and follow-up care plan (they may not have been part of your regular cancer care team)
- You might change doctors in the future

You might want to fill out a cancer treatment summary or survivorship care plan and keep it for your records. Ask your doctor if they have one for you, or scan here to see examples:



# Questions to ask your doctor about your follow-up care

## Questions about follow-up care

- Who will I see for my follow-up care? Do they have experience with cancer survivors?
- How often do I need follow-up visits?

## Questions about symptoms and side effects

- Are there symptoms I should watch for? What should I do if I notice one of these symptoms?
- What long-term side effects or late effects are possible from my treatment?

## Questions about cancer coming back

- What are the chances of my cancer coming back?
- How can I lower my chances of the cancer coming back or of getting a second cancer?

## Questions about what you can do

- Do I need to take any special medicines or eat a special diet?
- Who can I talk with if I am very anxious or worried about the cancer returning?

This information was originally published at:

[www.cancer.net/survivorship/follow-care-after-cancer-treatment/importance-follow-care](http://www.cancer.net/survivorship/follow-care-after-cancer-treatment/importance-follow-care).

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<https://www.cancer.org/about-us/our-partners/asco.html>

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