

# LIVING HEALTHY AS A CANCER SURVIVOR: LIFESTYLE CHOICES

A cancer survivor is a person who has been diagnosed with cancer. They are considered a survivor for the rest of their life.

- There are both physical and emotional side effects of cancer and its treatment. They can affect survivors in different ways.
- Choosing healthy behaviors is important. You can lower your risk of getting cancer again through exercise, eating healthy foods and not being overweight.
- This document provides survivors with information on ways to live healthy after treatment ends. The document should not replace consultation with a health care provider. It is important that all survivors see their health care provider for regular medical care.

## Find Ways to Relax and Cope With Stress

- Take care of your basic needs, like eating healthy, exercising and getting enough sleep.
- Talk to your health care provider about meeting with a social worker, psychologist or support group if you have stress and anxiety.
- Stress can be caused by a busy schedule. Use a calendar to track your appointments.
- Practice meditation, music, prayer or art to establish a sense of calm and peace.
- Spend time outside and enjoy the fresh air.

## Get a Good Night's Sleep

Cancer survivors may have sleep problems after treatment, and find it hard to get the recommended seven hours of sleep or more a night. This can be due to treatments, pain, medication, stress and anxiety. Try these tips:

- Go to bed and wake up at the same time every day.
- Go to bed when tired. Get up if you cannot sleep after a few minutes.
- Come up with a calming bedtime routine, like a warm bath or reading.
- Talk with a physical therapist about comfortable pillow, mattress and sleep positions.



## Use Sun Protection

Limiting exposure to the sun and other sources of ultraviolet light are the best ways to lower the risk of skin cancer.

- Stay in the shade - especially during midday hours.
- Wear a hat and clothing that covers your skin - including arms and legs.
- Wear sunglasses that block harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays.
- Use sunscreen.
- Avoid indoor tanning.

## Ask Your Health Care Provider About Vaccinations

Two vaccinations may be important for cancer survivors.

### 1. **Flu (Influenza) Vaccine**

The flu vaccine may protect against influenza, which can cause breathing problems. As a cancer survivor, you may be at greater risk of problems related to the flu due to a weakened immune system. Family members may also want to consider getting a yearly flu vaccine.

### 2. **Pneumonia (Pneumococcal Vaccine)**

Pneumonia is caused by bacteria that spread to different parts of the body including the lungs, sinuses, throat and ears. A pneumonia vaccine can help prevent individuals with weakened immune systems from getting pneumonia.

Talk to your health care provider about which flu and pneumonia vaccines may be right for you.

- Check with your local health department about getting vaccines free or at little cost, if they are not covered by your insurance.



## Helpful Resources for Survivors

- Call The American Cancer Society's National Cancer Information Center at 1-800-227-2345 for more information and resources.



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