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After Gallbladder Cancer Treatment

Get information about life as a cancer survivor, next steps, and what you can do to help.

Living as a Gallbladder Cancer Survivor

For many people, cancer treatment often raises questions about next steps as a survivor.

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Living as a Gallbladder Cancer Survivor

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For some people with gallbladder cancer, treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. The end of treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, yet it's hard not to worry about cancer coming back. This is very common if you've had cancer.

For other people, the cancer might never go away completely. Some people may get regular treatment with chemotherapy or other treatments to try and help keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that doesn't go away can be difficult and

very stressful.

Life after cancer means returning to some familiar things and also making some new choices.

Follow-up care

After you have completed treatment, your doctors will still want to watch you closely. It's very important to go to all follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask about symptoms, and do physical exams, and may order blood [tests¹](#) or [imaging tests²](#), like CT scans.

If you've had surgery and have no signs of cancer remaining, many doctors recommend follow-up with imaging tests about every 6 months for at least the first 2 years, but not all doctors follow this same schedule. Follow-up is needed to check for cancer that has come back or spread. It's also needed to check for possible side effects of certain treatments.

This is the time for you to ask your cancer care team any questions and discuss any concerns you might have.

Almost any cancer treatment can have [side effects³](#). Some may last for a few weeks to months, but others can last the rest of your life. Don't hesitate to tell your cancer care team about any symptoms or side effects bothering you so they can help you manage them.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan⁴](#) for you. This plan might include:

- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests
- A schedule for other tests you might need in the future, such as early detection (screening) tests for other types of cancer, or tests to look for long-term health effects from your cancer or its treatment
- A list of possible late- or long-term side effects from your treatment, including what to watch for and when you should contact your doctor
- Diet and physical activity suggestions
- Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health care

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep health insurance. Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and even though no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

At some point after your cancer treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who doesn't know about your medical history. It's important to keep copies of your medical records to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment. Learn more in [Keeping Copies of Important Medical Records⁵](#).

Can I lower my risk of gallbladder cancer progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) gallbladder cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the cancer growing or coming back, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements. Unfortunately, it's not yet clear if there are things you can do that will help.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as [not smoking⁶](#), [eating well⁷](#), [getting regular physical activity⁸](#), and [staying at a healthy weight⁹](#) might help, but no one knows for sure. Still, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your health that can extend beyond your risk of gallbladder cancer or other cancers.

About dietary supplements

So far, no [dietary supplements¹⁰](#) (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of gallbladder cancer progressing or coming back. This doesn't mean that no supplements will help, but it's important to know that none have been proven to do so.

Dietary supplements are not regulated like medicines in the United States – they do not have to be proven effective (or even safe) before being sold, although there are limits on what they're allowed to claim they can do. If you're thinking about taking any type of nutritional supplement, talk to your health care team. They can help you decide which ones you can use safely while avoiding those that might be harmful.

If the cancer comes back

If the cancer does recur at some point, your treatment options will depend on where the cancer is located, what treatments you've had before, and your overall health. For more information on how recurrent gallbladder cancer is treated, see [Treatment Options Based on the Extent of Gallbladder Cancer](#).¹¹

For more general information on recurrence, you may want to see [Understanding Recurrence](#).¹²

Getting emotional support

Some amount of feeling [depressed, anxious, or worried](#)¹³ is normal when cancer is a part of your life. Some people are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from help and support from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others. Learn more in [Life After Cancer](#).¹⁴

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests.html
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14. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html
15. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/gallbladder-cancer/references.html

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Rock CL, Thomson C, Gansler T, et al. American Cancer Society guideline for diet and physical activity for cancer prevention. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians.* 2020;70(4). doi:10.3322/caac.21591. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21591> on June 9, 2020.

[See all references for Gallbladder Cancer](#)

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