Patient & Family Guide

2026

Cancer Survivorship Care Guide

nova scotia health
Cancer Care Program
www.nscancercare.ca

what HAPPENS now?

Living Beyond Cancer

Follow up care for Cancer Patients

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Introduction

Your cancer treatments are now finished. You are joining a growing number of people living with and beyond cancer. Finishing cancer treatment can be a time of highs and lows. For some people, going back to "normal life" or a "new normal" is not easy. Some people may feel lost because they are no longer receiving treatments or seeing their cancer care team regularly.

You may feel a sense of relief finishing your treatment yet, it is normal to have concerns about what's next. Follow up is an important part of your cancer care.

This guide will help you manage some aspects of life after cancer treatment and provides information on ways to take care of your health.

You and your primary care providers (i.e., family doctor, nurse practitioner) are an important part of your follow up care. Your cancer doctor will send your primary care provider a letter outlining a summary of your cancer treatment and your follow up care plan. Your primary care provider can contact your cancer doctor and if needed, you can be referred back to your cancer doctor. For some, their follow up care will be provided by both their primary care team and their cancer care team.



If you do not have a primary care provider, you can register for one at https://needafamilypractice.nshealth.ca or by calling 811.

You can also register to receive virtual care at https://www.nshealth.ca/virtual-care. VirtualCareNS gives Nova Scotians virtual access to a primary care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) while you are on the waitlist for a family practice.

To use VirtualCareNS, you need to:

- have a valid Nova Scotia health card number. If you are new to the province, you cannot use VirtualCareNS until you have received your healthcare card.
- be able to access the internet through a computer or mobile device.
- have an e-mail address.
- be located within the province when accessing VirtualCareNS.

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What is Follow up Care?



The goals of follow up care are to:

- monitor your ongoing health after treatment is finished.
- improve your overall health and well-being.
- support you with any problems you may have (.i.e. physical and emotional side effects).
- monitor and test for possible recurrence or a new cancer.

Follow up care involves regular visits with your primary care provider to talk about and monitor your health. Medical tests may be ordered depending on the type of cancer you had, and any symptoms you are experiencing. This survivorship care plan is only meant as a guide. It does not replace information and recommendations of your cancer doctor and your primary care providers.

Follow Up Care Plan

Follow Up Care	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Primary Care Doctor / Nurse Practitioner Visit	Every 3-6 months	Every 3-6 months	Every 3-6 months	Every 3-6 months	Every 6-12 months

Five years after your last treatment, you should have annual visits with your primary care provider. If you visit a clinic with a group practice, it is best if one primary care provider or nurse practitioner be responsible for your follow up care.

Managing Life and Fear of Recurrence After Treatment

One of the biggest concerns for cancer patients is that their cancer may return some day. The fear of recurrence is normal and experienced by many cancer survivors. You can learn how to manage these fears of recurrence.

Some helpful suggestions include:

- Recognize your emotions. It can help to talk about your fears with a trusted friend, family member, or your primary care provider.

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- Join a support group. A support group will allow you to share your feelings and fears with others who have recently finished cancer treatment. We talk more about this later in the booklet under Support Groups.
- If you are having difficulty coping with fears and worries, you may want to talk to a therapist or counsellor.



It is also helpful to stay as physically healthy as possible.

Some helpful suggestions include:

- Eating well
- Being physically active
- Get plenty of rest and relaxation
- Avoid alcohol and tobacco

During your follow up visits with your primary care provider, it is important to mention:

- Physical problems that interfere with your daily life, like fatigue, problems with your bladder, bowel, sexual function, difficulty concentrating, memory changes, trouble sleeping, weight gain or loss
- Emotional problems such as anxiety or depression.
- New prescription drugs, vitamins, herbs or supplements you are taking.
- Changes in your family medical history.

Your primary care provider can decide whether the problems are related to the cancer, the treatment you received, or an unrelated health issue.



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Managing Side Effects After Treatment

Most people have physical or emotional side effects after cancer treatment. Side effects can start right away, or they can take weeks or months to begin. Some side effects improve with time. For some people, however, side effects may last for many years or may be permanent.

If any of the side effects noted below are a problem for you, talk to your primary care provider. If there is a Cancer Patient Navigator in your area, they can also help. Call 1-866-524-1234.

Aches and Pains: You may have general body aches as a side effect of your treatments. This may last for a time after your therapy is completed. Usually acetaminophen, heat or warm baths and gentle exercise will help. If your aches and pains continue to interfere with your daily routine or your ability to enjoy yourself, your primary care provider can suggest other options.

Brain Fog or Chemo Brain: Cancer patients and survivors can be frustrated by the mental cloudiness they notice before, during, and after cancer treatment. This common cancer side effect is called Brain Fog or Chemo Brain. The term Chemo Brain can be misleading as chemotherapy is not the only cause of concentration and memory problems.



Brain fog is real. It is not imagined by patients. Brain fog might last a short time, or it might continue for years. Brain fog affects everyday life for many people living beyond cancer treatment.

To learn more about managing Brain Fog:

- Review the “Cancer Related Brain Fog” resource, visit: https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/NSHCCP4029.
- Watch the video titled Coping with Cancer Related Brain Fog on our NS Health Patient Education Vimeo site: https://vimeo.com/showcase/4902954
- Attend the eight-week online group learning program about Brain Fog. This is offered by the Canadian Cancer Society in partnership with Wellspring Cancer Canada. Visit https://portal.wellspring.ca for more information and to register.

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Cancer Related Fatigue: Tiredness or fatigue is the most common symptom reported by cancer patients and survivors. It can happen at any time during or after cancer treatment. Cancer related fatigue is a feeling of lack of energy that is not linked with recent activity or effort. Cancer related fatigue is unlike the fatigue of everyday life. It can be very draining.

Cancer related fatigue may last for many months beyond the end of treatment. How long it lasts is different for each person. It may not improve with rest, and it can affect your ability to function.

To learn more about managing fatigue:

- Review the "Managing Cancer Related Fatigue" pamphlet, visit https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/nshccp4030.
- Watch the video titled Managing Your Cancer Related Fatigue on our NS Health Patient Education Vimeo site https://vimeo.com/showcase/4902954.
- Watch Dr. Mike Evans' Fatigue video https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lUYUOD_jbyU.

Sadness/Depression: Feeling sad or depressed is common after cancer treatment. Continuing to be active with your family, and in your community, can help you deal with these feelings. Physical activity and hobbies are also helpful. Your primary care provider may suggest other approaches, such as talking to a counselor or medication.

Your family members may also be feeling depressed or anxious. They may benefit from talking to their primary care provider.

To learn more about depression:

- Watch the video titled Taking Control of Your Cancer Related Sadness and Depression on our NS Health Patient Education Vimeo site https://vimeo.com/showcase/4902954.
- Review the pamphlet "Coping with Cancer-Related Sadness and Depression" https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/NSHCCP4027.
- Visit the Depression Hurts website www.depressionhurts.ca.

Difficulty Returning to Work or School: Many people experience distress about returning to school or work after treatment. When you do go back, you may find your work or studies more challenging than before your cancer treatment.

If you are returning to school; talk with a student advisor, your professors or teachers and your primary care provider about how to deal with your return to school. For more information about returning to school after cancer treatment visit https://youngadultcancer.ca or https://www.teenagecancertrust.org.

If you are returning to work; talk with your workplace's occupational health team, your employer and your

primary care provider about how to deal with your return to work.

- The website "Cancer and Work" has helpful information about returning to work after cancer treatment. Visit https://www.cancerandwork.ca.
- Attend the five-week online group learning program about Returning to Work. This is offered by the Canadian Cancer Society, in partnership with Wellspring Cancer Canada. Visit https://portal.wellspring.ca for more information and to register.

Early or Treatment Related Menopause: Talk to your primary care provider about any changes in your menstrual cycle (period). Cancer treatment may cause you to go into menopause or perimenopause at a younger age than usual. You may have hot flashes, vaginal dryness, mood changes or changes in how you respond sexually. Primary care providers can help with these symptoms or suggest someone to talk to.

Financial Concerns: Many cancer patients have a reduced income and increased expenses during cancer treatment and after treatment has ended. If this is a concern for you, reach out to a social worker who may be able to help. In Halifax, you can call 902-240-8129. For the rest of the province, please call 1-866-524-1234 to talk with a Cancer Patient Navigator who may be able to help.



Fertility Issues: Depending on the type of cancer and the treatment, you may have questions or concerns about your ability to have children. If this has not yet been discussed with you, it is important to talk with your primary care provider.

For more information about fertility, go to Atlantic Canada Onco-Fertility at:
https://www.apphon-rohppa.com/fr/Oncofertility

Hearing Problems: Some cancers and cancer treatment can cause hearing problems. These problems can include:

- hearing loss (mild to severe).
- ringing in the ears (tinnitus).

Hearing loss and tinnitus can happen alone or together. This may go away after some time or may be permanent. Hearing problems can affect your quality of life. Tell your healthcare provider about any hearing changes.

Lymphedema: Lymphedema refers to tissue swelling caused by a buildup of fluid that can occur after

surgery or radiation treatments. Signs of lymphedema include swelling, a feeling of heaviness or tightness in the affected area. It most commonly affects the arms and legs, but can also occur in the neck, chest, abdomen, or genitals.

Physical activity and weightlifting can be helpful to deal with the symptoms of lymphedema. If you develop lymphedema, ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist who is certified to treat lymphedema.

To learn more about lymphedema, please read the NSH Cancer Care program pamphlet titled Lymphedema: https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/NSHCCP4091

You can also visit the Atlantic Clinic Lymphedema Network's website at www.canadalymph.ca.

Bone Loss and Osteoporosis: Osteoporosis is common after some cancer treatment and causes bones to become weak or brittle. People treated with hormone therapy may be at greater risk.

Calcium and vitamin D are essential for strong bones. Your primary care provider will recommend how much calcium and vitamin D you should take each day. They may also prescribe medications to help manage it. Weight bearing exercises and strength training also help prevent bone thinning. Talk to your primary care provider about whether this is safe for you.

To learn more about osteoporosis visit Osteoporosis Canada https://osteoporosis.ca.

Peripheral Neuropathy: Peripheral neuropathy is a group of symptoms caused by damage to nerves that control the feelings and movements of our arms, legs, hands, feet, bowel and bladder. Radiation therapy, chemotherapy, surgery or the cancer itself may cause nerve damage for some patients.

For more information on Peripheral Neuropathy visit:
https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/nshccp4100.

Sexual Health Issues: Cancer and cancer treatment can affect your sexual health. Changes in sexuality can affect you and your partner's quality of life. Sexual problems can also be caused by side effects of treatment, such as fatigue, nausea, pain, and hormone changes. This can alter your self-image and cause emotional distress.

Common sexual health issues for people include:

- changes in desire/interest.
- changes in orgasmic intensity.
- body image changes.
- changes in sexual functioning.

Some people may experience:

- concerns related to early menopause.
- vaginal dryness and pain.
- changes in sexual sensitivity, such as nipple and genital sensitivity.
- changes in ability to comfortably perform sexual activities and positions as you used to.
- concerns regarding fertility.
- loss of ability to ejaculate.
- urinary leakage during orgasm.

Sex is a normal part of life. Your urologist or your primary care provider may be able to give you guidance and support or refer you to someone who can help. Other practitioners that can help include pelvic floor physiotherapists, sex therapists/coaches, and sexual health educators and stores. Sexual Health Nova Scotia has a network of sexual health centres across the province that can provide support: https://shns.ca/member-centres.

To learn more about sexual health and cancer visit the Canadian Cancer Society website www.cancer.ca or call their Cancer Information Helpline 1-888-939-3333. You can find their Sex, Intimacy, and Cancer guide here: https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/sex-intimacy-and-cancer.

If you are a member of the 2SLGBTQ+ community, you can find additional information and support at Queering Cancer: https://queeringcancer.ca.

See the list of books available at your local library on page 20.

Worry and Anxiety: Many people experience worry and anxiety after cancer treatment. Your primary care provider will be able to give you suggestions to help manage these concerns. You may also ask for a referral to talk with a social worker or a psychologist.

You may wish to view the video Taking Control of Your Cancer Related Worry and Anxiety education session, on our NS Health Patient Education Vimeo site https://vimeo.com/showcase/4902954.

For more information of this topic, please read the NSH patient education pamphlet titled Worry and Anxiety: https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/NSHCCP4023

Cancer Screening and Other Tests

It is important for you to continue with routine screening for cancer and other diseases. Talk with your primary care provider about other tests (e.g., blood pressure checks, diabetes screening and cholesterol testing) that you need.

Not all cancers have screening tests. We have listed the cancer screening programs available in Nova Scotia. Please talk with your cancer doctor or your primary care practitioner about what screening programs are important for you.

Breast Cancer Screening (Screening Mammography):

If you have not already started breast screening and are at least 40 years old you can contact Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program directly to book an appointment for a "Screening Mammogram".

If you are a breast cancer survivor, have breast implants or have a new breast symptom you need to see a primary care provider to be referred for a "Diagnostic Mammogram".

For more information about the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program or to book a Screening Mammogram call 1-800-565-0548 or visit https://nsbreastscreening.ca.

Cervical Cancer Screening: Screening for cervical cancer (also called a Pap test) should start within three years of becoming sexually active or at the age of 25, whichever comes first. If you have never been sexually active you do not need a Pap test. These screening guidelines only apply to those with no symptoms of cervical cancer who are, or have been, sexually active. If you have symptoms such as irregular vaginal bleeding or pelvic pain speak with your primary care provider.

- For most people, Pap testing should be done every three years.
- Those with a history of cancer of the cervix or who have been treated by LEEP, laser, cryotherapy, cone, hysterectomy should be screened annually for life.
- Those who are immunocompromised or HIV positive should be screened annually for life.
- Pap tests can be stopped at age 70 after having three or more negative Pap tests in the last 10 years.
- Pap screening can be stopped for those who have had a total hysterectomy for benign causes, with no treatment for abnormal cell growth on the cervix.

To book a Pap test contact the Well Woman Clinic of your choosing, the list of clinics is posted on the YourHealthNS website. Visit https://www.yourhealthns.ca for more details.

To learn more about cervical cancer screening guidelines, call Nova Scotia Health (NSH) Cancer Care Program: 1-888-480-8588 or visit www.nscancercare.ca. Please note, we are unable to book screening tests.

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Colon Cancer Prevention Program: All Nova Scotians, who are between 50 and 74 years old and are registered with MSI (have a Nova Scotia Health Card), will automatically get a colon cancer home screening test in the mail every two years. Colon cancer screening works best when you take the test when you are feeling well – before you have any symptoms or warning signs.

Talk with your primary care provider if you have concerns about colon cancer or have changes in your bowel habits.

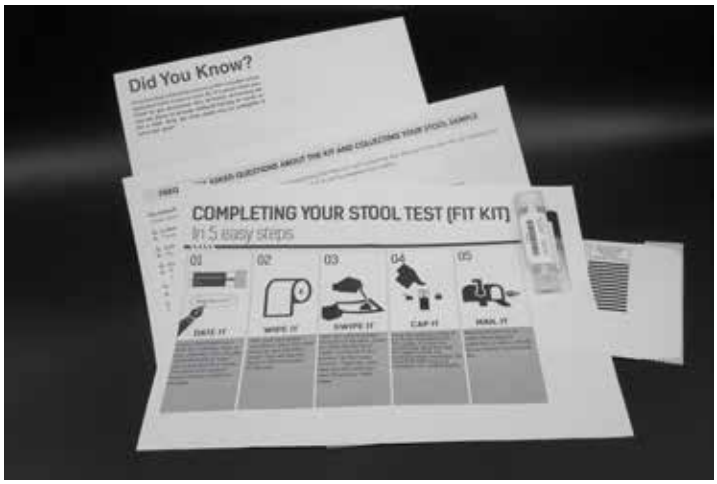
To learn more about the colon cancer home screening test call NSH Cancer Care Program: 1-866-599-2267 or visit www.nscancercare.ca.

Lung Cancer Screening Program: Nova Scotians are invited to call the Lung Screening Program if they:

- are between 50 and 74 years old.
- have a history of daily smoking for at least 20 years (even if you have quit).
- have no warning signs or symptoms of lung cancer.

Your primary care provider may also refer you. You can also self-refer by emailing: LungScreening@nshealth.ca.

Prostate Cancer Screening: Talk to your primary care provider about your risk of prostate cancer and the benefits and harms of PSA (Prostate Specific Antigen) testing. To learn more, visit the Canadian Cancer Society website https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/cancer-types/prostate/finding-cancer-early or call 1-888-939-3333.



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Living Well After Cancer



Doing your best to follow a healthy lifestyle is important after cancer treatment. This will increase your quality of life and may help decrease the risk of your cancer returning.

Dental Health: Cancer and cancer treatment may cause dental problems. It is important that you have regular dental checkups and that you inform your dentist of the type of cancer treatment you received. Brushing with a soft toothbrush and using toothpaste for sensitive teeth is recommended.

Eating Well: Eating well will help you regain your strength, maintain a healthy body weight and feel better overall. There are no special foods or vitamins to take after cancer treatment. Following Canada's Food Guide is the best approach https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-guide.html.

A clinical dietitian can help you learn more about eating well. Ask your cancer care team to refer you to a dietitian at the QEII or the Cape Breton Cancer Center. You can also ask your primary care provider for a referral to a dietitian in your community. Visit NSH Healthy Eating website for more information https://library.nshealth.ca/HealthyLiving/healthyeating.

You can find helpful information about diet and cancer by visiting www.nourishonline.ca.

HealthyNS also offers online health and wellness programs on topics such as healthy eating which you can find by going to this website https://library.nshealth.ca/HealthyLiving/RegisterForPrograms.

You can also visit your local Public Library to borrow The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide and Cookbook by Jean Lamantia (2012)

Immunizations:

- You should have a flu shot every fall.
  - › For more information on this topic, please read the NSH patient education pamphlet 'Flu Shot' - Information for Cancer Patients, Survivors and Family Members: https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/NSHCCP0031.
- You should have routine COVID booster shots.
  - › For more information on this topic, please read the NSH patient education pamphlet "COVID-19 Vaccination and Cancer FAQ": https://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources/NSHCCP4000.

- If you are 65 or older, have diabetes, heart or lung problems, you should also have a pneumonia vaccine.
- Ask your primary care provider about the benefits and risks of getting a shingles vaccination.

More information about vaccines and immunizations can be found at :
https://www.nshealth.ca/public-health/immunizations.

Limit or Avoid Alcohol: You can talk about the risks associated with alcohol use with your primary care provider. Drinking alcohol increases your risk for several types of cancer. There is no safe level of alcohol intake. The risk of cancer increases regardless of the type of alcohol you drink (beer, wine, cider, spirits or liqueur). If you do drink alcohol, follow Canada's guidance on Alcohol and Health by visiting:

https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/substance-use/alcohol.html.

- Smoking and drinking together raise cancer risk much more than smoking or drinking alone. Primary Health Care offers comprehensive information about staying well, prevention and living a healthy life with chronic conditions. For information about alcohol, risks, guidance and supports: https://library.nshealth.ca/healthyliving/alcohol
- To learn more about the risks of alcohol use and cancer visit: https://www.nshealth.ca/cancer/cancer-prevention-and-health-promotion

Physical Activity: Whether you are getting back to activities you enjoy or starting new ones, being active after cancer treatment is important. Physical activity can help improve appetite, energy levels and sleep. Physical activity may also help reduce risk of cancer coming back, fatigue and anxiety.

It is recommended you work towards being physically active at least 150 minutes per week (30 minutes per day) and that you start slowly and progress gradually. It is important to always check with your primary care provider about the activities and level of activity that would be best for you. Keep in mind that the best activity is one you enjoy doing.

Some hospitals and community organizations have exercise programs specifically for people living with and beyond cancer. To learn more about physical activity please visit:
https://library.nshealth.ca/HealthyLiving/physicalactivity. Ask your health care team about options in your area or contact the Physical Activity and Cancer (PAC) Lab.
Email: EXCancer@nshealth.ca or phone: 902-473-2035

Primary Health Care offers comprehensive information about staying well, prevention and living a healthy life with chronic conditions. Find links to online exercise and wellness programs here:
https://library.nshealth.ca/HealthyLiving/RegisterForPrograms

Protect Your Skin: Having chemotherapy or radiation may make you more sensitive to harm from the sun and other sources of ultraviolet (UV) rays. Some prescription and over-the-counter medications can also make skin very sensitive to the sun.

Protect yourself by being informed and using good sun protection practices whenever you are outdoors and especially when the UV index is moderate or high. If you spend time outdoors, check the UV index daily and practice sun safety as recommended.

The higher the UV index, the more protection is required. Plan recreation activities in the shade, cover up with clothing and a wide-brimmed hat, wear sunglasses and use a broad-spectrum sunscreen with a Sun Protection Factor (SPF) of 30 or higher. Avoid use of tanning beds. To learn more about sun safety visit https://www.nshealth.ca/cancer/cancer-prevention-and-health-promotion.

Stop using commercial tobacco products*: Stopping tobacco use after a cancer diagnosis can result in fewer treatment and cancer related complications. It can make your cancer treatments more effective, improve survival and reduce the chance of a recurrence or being diagnosed with a new cancer. Tobacco use not only causes lung cancer, but it also increases the risk of developing many other cancers including cancers of the mouth, throat, bladder, kidney, esophagus and larynx, cervix, stomach and pancreas. Tobacco use is the number one preventable cause of cancer in Canada.

It is never too late to quit tobacco. To learn more about the supports available to help you try to quit:

- Visit: https://library.nshealth.ca/HealthyLiving/StopTobaccoUse
- Talk to your primary care provider
- Call Tobacco-Free Nova Scotia at 811. This is the provincial quit line for our province. Speak with a trained tobacco cessation counselor. They offer free, non-judgmental assistance and counselling to help you try to quit. Online information about Tobacco-Free Nova Scotia and the supports available can be found at: https://tobaccofree.novascotia.ca.

***** *Tobacco includes smoked tobacco (cigarettes, pipes, cigars), vaped tobacco, chewing tobacco and snuff. It does not include the use of tobacco for traditional, ceremonial or spiritual purposes.*

Spirituality: Many patients and caregivers identify spirituality as a key part of coping with cancer. Spirituality includes hope, meaning, and faith. Spiritual needs vary, depending on cultural and religious traditions. You can reach out to members of your own faith community or you may find it helpful to meet with a spiritual care practitioner (also called a chaplain).

To contact Spiritual Care in Nova Scotia Health:

- In Halifax: Weekdays from 8am-4pm Call (902) 473-4055
- In Sydney: Weekdays from 8am-4:30pm Call (902) 567-7293

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Programs and Services to Support You in Your Survivorship



Living Beyond Cancer: What Happens Next?

The Living Beyond Cancer Video Series provides information about what you can expect after your cancer treatment ends.
Topics include:

- What is Follow up Care.
- What to Expect after Cancer Treatment.
- Physical Activity.
- Eating Well After Cancer.
- Emotional and Practical Support.

You can view the Living Beyond Cancer videos by going to:
https://vimeo.com/showcase/cancereducation

Nova Scotia Health Cancer Care Program – Psychosocial Oncology Services

Many people who have had cancer find that talking with a professional counselor or therapist can be helpful. Your cancer care team are the experts in treating cancer, but you are the expert in the way cancer affects your life. Counseling and psychological therapy can help you adjust, cope and manage your concerns. It can also help you find strength and meaning. You can go to counseling on your own or with members of your family.

If you would like to talk to someone, you can ask your primary care provider, your cancer doctor or another member of your cancer care team to make a referral for psychosocial care. You can also reach out yourself anytime. Self-referrals are accepted in all parts of the province.

- QEII Cancer Care Program 902-240-8129.
- Cape Breton Cancer Centre 902-567-8551.
- Antigonish 902-867-4500 ext. 4993.
- Yarmouth (Tri-Facilities) 902-740-1704.
- South Shore or Valley 902-599-2945.
- Cumberland, Colchester or Pictou Counties 902-397-3125.

Support can be provided to you by phone, virtually or in person. Depending on where you live, you may be referred to a social worker, psychologist, cancer patient navigator or spiritual care provider.

If you are having difficulty coping and have already had support, please reach out to them directly.

Cancer Patient Navigators

If you live in areas of Nova Scotia **except for Halifax and East Hants**, Cancer Patient Navigators are available to help. They can help you with:

- managing your symptoms and side effects,
- providing emotional support to you and your family, and
- connecting you with other healthcare professionals and resources in the cancer program and in your community.

To reach your local Cancer Patient Navigator please call 1-866-524-1234. **If you live in Halifax (All of HRM) or East Hants, please call 902-240-8129 to speak with our support team.**

Canadian Cancer Society (CCS)

The Cancer Information Helpline is available to anyone to answer cancer-related questions . You can access information specialists by calling toll-free 1-888-939-3333 or online through a live chat, visit https://cancer.ca/en/living-with-cancer/how-we-can-help/talk-to-an-information-specialist.

The Helpline provides current, reliable information on:

- cancer treatment and side effects
- clinical trials
- coping with cancer
- emotional support services
- prevention
- help in the community
- complementary therapies

Community Services Locator is a directory that helps cancer patients, caregivers and healthcare providers find the services they need. They have over 4500 cancer-related services listed.

You can reach this directory by visiting:
https://cancer.ca/en/living-with-cancer/how-we-can-help/community-services-locator

You can search for things like emotional support programs and homecare support. :

Connect with the **CCS Online Community**. When you or a loved one is diagnosed with cancer, the CCS online peer support community may be helpful. You will find people who have been there, who can offer support, tips and insights from their experience. Membership in this community is free, and open to people 18 years of age and older.

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Here are a few of the topics that **Cancer Connection** (https://www.cancerconnection.ca) members are discussing:

- coping with treatment and side effects
- self-care tips for caregivers
- living with advanced cancer
- where to find practical resources such as financial assistance, home care or transportation to treatment

Wellspring Programs: Wellspring offers a range of specialized programs designed to provide connection and belonging. These programs for cancer patients and survivors include topics to:

- help ease pain, fatigue and distress.
- build strength and mobility.
- support financial and workplace challenges.

Wellspring programs are available across Canada online, at no charge. You can visit the website by going to: https://wellspring.ca.

Healthy Nova Scotia Programs: The Community Health Teams in partnership with the IWK offer FREE online wellness sessions delivered over Zoom for Healthcare, as well as some in person sessions. These sessions are available to residents of Nova Scotia age 18 and older with a valid NS health card.

For information and to see a list of classes offered visit https://cht.cdha.nshealth.ca/selectCourse.aspx or call 902-460-4560 (HRM) or toll free at 1-844-460-4555.

Private Medical Insurance and Employee Assistance Programs: Many employers offer Employee Assistance Plans which offer a limited number of free counseling sessions. Please contact your Human Resources Department for information. Counseling/therapy is also covered under some private insurance plans, such as Blue Cross. There may be a yearly maximum as to how much your plan will pay. Contact your insurer for the details specific to your plan.

Support Groups: There are many different cancer support groups. Some are for the patients. Others are for the family and/or friends of the patient. Groups may be led by a health care professional or peer led. You can find support groups that meet face-to-face or online.

It may help to talk with the person running a support group to see if the group offers what you need. You may want to check out a few different groups to find one that works best for you. It is hard to know if a support group will be right for you without going to at least two meetings.

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It is important to feel comfortable to talk about what you think and feel in a support group. If this is not the case, you can talk with the facilitator (support group leader) and then decide what is best for you.

Many people choose online support groups. These groups help people who may not wish to attend a face-to-face group or if an in-person group is not available. Be aware when looking for an online group that anyone with internet access can create an online group, even if they do not have any qualifications.

To find a support group in your area, contact trusted organizations such as:

- Canadian Cancer Society toll-free 1-888-939-3333
- Wellspring Canada toll-free 1-877-499-9904

Or, contact a social worker to ask what support groups are in your area:

- QEII Cancer Care Program Halifax: 902-240-8129
- Cape Breton Cancer Centre Sydney: 902-567-8551
- Antigonish 902-867-4500 ext. 4993
- Yarmouth (Tri-Facilities) 902-740-1704
- South Shore or Valley 902-599-2945
- Cumberland, Colchester or Pictou Counties 902-397-3125
- Cancer Patient Navigators: 1-866-524-1234 (Outside Halifax and East Hants)

Books: Most of these helpful books are available in your local library or bookstore:

- After You Ring the Bell:10 Challenges for Cancer Survivor. Anne Katz. Oncology Nursing Society. 2012.
- Beyond Surviving. Cancer and Your Spiritual Journey. David Maginley. Tristan Press. 2017.
- Cancer is a Word Not a Sentence by Dr. Robert Buckman.
- Life after Cancer Treatment. Canadian Cancer Society, 2008. Visit www.cancer.ca or call 1-888-939-3333.
- Living Well after Cancer. A guide for cancer survivors, their families and friends. The Cancer Council New South Wales, February 2010.
- Picking Up the Pieces. Moving Forward after Surviving Cancer. Sherri Magee and Kathy Scalzo. Raincoast Books, Rutgers University Press. 2007.
- The Healing Journey: Overcoming the Crisis of Cancer. Alastair J Cunningham. 2010.
- The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times by Pema Chodron.

Websites:

The Internet is a great source of information about moving forward after cancer, but it is also full of misinformation. In addition to the websites noted earlier in this booklet, you can rely on these websites:

- British Columbia Cancer Agency: http://www.bccancer.bc.ca
- Canadian Cancer Society: www.cancer.ca or call 1-888-939-3333.
- Canadian Cancer Survivors Network https://survivornet.ca
- Healing and Cancer: https://cancerpep.org
- Cancer Survivors: https://www.canceradvocacy.ca
- Young Adult Cancer Canada: www.youngadultcancer.ca

2SLGBTQIA+ cancer resources:

- Canadian Cancer Survivor Network: https://survivornet.ca/learn/patient-challenges/lgbtq-issues
- BC Cancer: https://bccancer.libguides.com/pathfinder-2SLGBTQIA
- Queering Cancer: https://queeringcancer.ca/resources

Indigenous resources:

- Mi'kmaw Health and Wellness: https://mhwns.ca
- First Nations Health Authority (BC) https://www.fnha.ca/what-we-do/healthy-living/cancer

For Information in Languages other than English

There are a number of reputable sources of cancer information in languages other than English. We suggest the following resources that offer their information in other languages:

- Cancer Quebec: www.cancerquebec.ca (for Information in French)
- British Columbia Cancer Agency: http://www.bccancer.bc.ca
- Canadian Cancer Society: www.cancer.ca or call 1-888-939-3333
- Cancer Care Manitoba: www.cancercare.mb.ca
- Cancer Council New South Wales: https://www.cancercouncil.com.au/cancer-information/multilingual-cancer-information
- Vancouver Coastal Health: http://vch.eduhealth.ca

For some of these websites, you may need to search for "information in other languages".

Getting Involved

Cancer patients, families, and friends have valuable insights about cancer care. Sharing that experience can help us make improvements. Consider joining the Cancer Patient Family Network (CPFN).

The CPFN is a program of NSH Cancer Care Program. The CPFN connects cancer patients, family, and friends with ways to improve the cancer system. Members of the CPFN can complete surveys, join focus groups, join committees, and review patient education resources.

To learn more:

Website: https://www.nshealth.ca/clinics-programs-and-services/cancer-patient-family-network

Join the CPFN https://www.engage4health.ca/cancer-patient-family-network

E-mail: CPFN@nshealth.ca

Follow up Cancer Care Schedule

You can use this chart to keep track of your follow up care.

Follow Up Care	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Primary Care Doctor / Nurse Practitioner Visit	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD
	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	
	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD
	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	

Related Information for Cancer Survivors

- Book of Hope: Healthcare and Survival in the North by Agnes R. Pascal (2025) – Canada
- Beyond Breast Cancer: A Mayo Clinic Guide to Healing and Wellness by Tufia C. Haddah, M.D & Kathryn J. Ruddy, M.D (2023) – USA
- Living with the Long-Term Effects of Cancer: Acknowledging Trauma and other Emotional Challenges by Dr. Cordelia Galgut (2020) – United Kingdom
- Woman Cancer Sex by Anne Katz (2020) – Canada
- Cancer, Sex and Intimacy: A Couple's Guide by Anne Katz (2026) – Canada
- Man Cancer Sex by Anne Katz (2020)
- After Cancer Care (2015) by Gerald M. Lemole – USA https://halifax.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S127C1489829
- Before and After Cancer Treatment by Julie K. Silver (2015) https://halifax.bibliocommons.com/v2/record/S214C793979
- Life After Cancer Treatment by Canadian Cancer Society (2025) - Canada https://cancer.ca/en/cancer-information/resources/publications/life-after-cancer-treatment
- Guidelines for Patients: Survivorship Care for Healthy Living by National Comprehensive Cancer Network by NCCN (2024) – USA https://www.nccn.org/patientresources/patient-resources/guidelines-for-patients/guidelines-for-patients-details?patientGuidelineId=52
- Guidelines for Patients: Survivorship Care for cancer-related Late and Long-Term Effects by NCCN (2024) - USA https://www.nccn.org/patients/guidelines/content/PDF/survivorship-crl-patient.pdf

Patient and family feedback is very important to us.

We would like to invite you to send any comments or suggestions on how to improve this booklet to education.cancercare@nshealth.ca or feel free to call us at 1-866-599-2267.

Looking for more health information?

Find this brochure and all our patient resources here: http://library.nshealth.ca/cancer

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to http://library.novascotia.ca

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It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider.
If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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