

what HAPPENS now?

Follow up Care for
**Cancer
Patients**

**Living
Beyond
Cancer**

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Introduction

Your cancer treatments are now finished. You are joining a growing number of people living beyond cancer. Follow up care is a very important part of your cancer care.

This guide will help you learn how to manage your life after cancer treatment, understand what you can do to reduce your risk of the cancer coming back and provide important information about other ways to take care of your health. This is a general follow up care guide, depending on the type of cancer you had you may require additional tests.

You and your health care providers 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 health care provider can contact your cancer doctor anytime. If needed, you can be referred back to your cancer doctor.

We hope this guide will be helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to your health care provider or cancer patient navigator, if there is one in your area.

If there are terms used in this booklet that you are not familiar with check the glossary on page 25, the glossary in the booklet “Cancer Care: A Guide for Patients, Families and Caregivers” that you received when you started your treatment or visit http://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/cancer_care_a_guide_for_patients_families_and_caregivers.pdf.

This follow up care plan is based on the American Society of Clinical Oncology Survivorship Care Guidelines. For more information visit: asco.org.

Please know that you are not alone as you move forward in your recovery.

What is Follow up Care?

The goals of follow up care are to:

- **Provide support.** Follow up care visits allow you to discuss your progress and any problems you have, such as dealing with the physical and emotional side effects of your cancer treatment and fear of recurrence.
- **Check for return of your cancer or a new cancer.**
- **Improve your overall health and well-being.**

Follow up care involves:

- **Regular visits with your health care provider.** These visits are very important to assess your health and talk about your progress.
- **Other tests** may be recommended depending on the type of cancer you had, your cancer treatment and how you are doing.

This plan is a guide and does not replace your health care provider's advice.

Follow up Care Plan

Follow up Care	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Years 4 and 5
Doctor/Nurse practitioner visit	Every 3-6 months	Every 3-6 months	Every 3-6 months	Every 6-12 months

After year 5, you should have annual visits with your health care provider.

If you visit a clinic with a group practice, it is best if one family doctor or nurse practitioner is responsible for your follow up care.

Returning Cancer: Signs to Watch For

One of the biggest concerns for cancer patients is that their cancer may return some day. The fear of recurrence is entirely normal. Although you cannot control if your cancer returns, you can control how much the fear of recurrence affects your life.

If your cancer returns, it is usually because cancer cells have spread. There is also a small risk of the cancer coming back where you had surgery or a new cancer growing in a different location.

Sometimes, it is possible to treat the new cancer successfully, if it is found early and can be removed. If it cannot be removed, cure is usually not possible, but treatment may improve symptoms and may extend your life.

Worrying about your cancer coming back is normal but try to avoid having this anxiety overwhelm you. If you are having difficulty coping you may want to consider getting counselling.

Make healthy choices. Eating well, being physically active, getting enough sleep and avoiding alcohol and tobacco can help you feel better both physically and emotionally.

Recognize your emotions. It can help to talk about your fears with a trusted friend, family member, or mental health professional.

Do not ignore your fears. Accept that you are going to feel afraid that your cancer may come back, and focus on ways to manage the anxiety.

Join a support group. A support group will allow you to share your feelings and fears with others who have recently finished cancer treatment.

During your follow up visits, it is important to talk openly about any physical or emotional problems you are having. Always mention any symptoms, pain, or concerns that are new or that will not go away. You should mention any:

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

It is important to be aware of any changes in your health between scheduled visits. Report any problems to your health care provider right away. They can decide whether the problems are related to the cancer, the treatment you received, or an unrelated health issue.

Cancer Screening and Other Tests

Just like people who have not had cancer, it is important for you to continue with routine screening for cancer and other diseases. Some examples are given below and other tests may be needed depending on your family history.

Talk with your health care provider about cancer screening and other tests.

Blood Pressure Checks: You should have your blood pressure checked regularly by your health care provider. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for stroke and heart disease. Keeping your blood pressure in normal range can reduce your risk of stroke and heart disease. If your blood pressure is high, your health care provider may prescribe a drug and will give you information about diet and physical activity that will help keep your blood pressure in normal range.

Breast Cancer Screening – Screening Mammography: You should speak to your health care provider about whether breast cancer screening is right for you. Screening is the best way to detect breast cancer early, but it is not a perfect test – a false positive result may create unnecessary worry and a false negative may lead to a false reassurance.

The 2018 Canadian Task Force on Preventive Health Care (CTFPHC) recommends that females aged 40 to 74 who are not at increased risk of developing breast cancer, reflect on their own values and beliefs in considering whether screening is right for them.

Current guidelines recommend mammography every 2-3 years for females aged 50-74 who have no increased risk factors such as:

- Personal history of breast cancer.
- Family history (mother, sister, daughter, father, brother, son).
- Evidence of high risk, such as genetic predisposition or radiation therapy to chest wall.

If you have any of the risk factors noted above talk with your health care provider about how often you should be screened for breast cancer.

In Nova Scotia, females aged 40+ who choose to be screened may contact the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program directly to book an appointment.

For more information about the Nova Scotia Breast Screening Program call **902-473-3960** or **1-800-565-0548** to book a breast screening appointment or visit **www.breastscreening.nshealth.ca**.

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Cancer Screening and Other Tests *(continued)*

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 later. If you have never been sexually active you do not need a Pap test. The cervix is a cylinder-shaped neck of tissue that connects the vagina and uterus.

- 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 discontinued at age 70 after having three or more negative Pap tests in the previous 10 years.
- Pap screening can be discontinued for those who have had a total hysterectomy for benign causes, with no treatment for abnormal cell growth on the cervix.

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 health care provider.

To learn more about cervical cancer screening guidelines, call Nova Scotia Health Authority (NSHA) Cancer Care Program: **1-888-480-8588** or visit **www.nscancercare.ca**.

Cholesterol Screening: You should have a cholesterol test at age 40 if you are a man, or age 50 if you are a woman. Start at a younger age if you have diabetes, heart disease, if you smoke or if you are overweight. Talk with your health care provider about how often you should have this test. High cholesterol has no symptoms. A blood test is the only way to see if you have it.

Cholesterol is a waxy substance found in your blood. Your body needs cholesterol to build healthy cells, but high levels of cholesterol can increase your risk of heart disease. A healthy diet, regular physical activity and sometimes a prescription drug can help reduce high cholesterol.

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Cancer Screening and Other Tests *(continued)*

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 good – before you have any symptoms or warning signs.

Talk with your health 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 NSHA Cancer Care Program: **1-866-599-2267** or visit **www.nscancercare.ca**.

Diabetes Screening: Starting at age 40, you should have a Fasting Plasma Glucose (FPG) and/or glycated hemoglobin (A1C) test every three years.

For those at high risk:

- Family history of diabetes.
- Being overweight.
- Aboriginal or African Nova Scotian.
- Personal history of gestational diabetes or pre-diabetes, heart disease, increased cholesterol or increased blood pressure.

Diabetes is a disease in which your body cannot produce insulin or cannot properly use the insulin it produces. Insulin is a hormone produced by your pancreas. Insulin's role is to regulate the amount of sugar in the blood. Having high blood sugar can cause diabetes related complications, like kidney disease, foot and leg problems, eye disease that can lead to blindness, heart attack & stroke, anxiety, nerve damage, amputation and erectile dysfunction.

To learn more, call the Canadian Diabetes Association at **1-800-226-8464** or visit **www.diabetes.ca**.

Prostate Cancer: Talk to your health care provider about your risk for prostate cancer and the benefits and harms of PSA testing. To learn more visit the Canadian Cancer Society's website **www.cancer.ca** or call **1-888-939-3333**.

What to Expect After Cancer Treatment

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

If any of the side effects noted below are a problem for you, talk to your health care provider. Your health care provider will provide you with support, connect you with other services and give you information about local resources.

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 health 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 with cancer.

To learn more about managing Brain Fog:

- Review the “Cancer Related Brain Fog” resource, visit <https://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/patientinformation/nscpp0068.pdf>.
- Attend a “Coping With Cancer Related Brain Fog” group learning session, see page 18.
- Attend the eight-week online group learning program about Brain Fog, offered by the Canadian Cancer Society, in partnership with Wellspring Cancer Canada. Visit <https://wellspring.ca/nova-scotia> for more information and to register.

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What to Expect After Cancer Treatment (*continued*)

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 other types of fatigue, it can be very draining.

Cancer related fatigue is more severe and lasts longer than other fatigue you may have had before you had cancer. It may not improve with rest and can affect your ability to function. The amount of fatigue, how often it happens, and how long it lasts can be different for each person.

To learn more about managing fatigue:

- Review the “Managing Cancer Related Fatigue” resource, visit <https://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/patientinformation/nscgp1685.pdf>.
- Visit My Cancer Fatigue <https://mycancerfatigue.ca/>.
- Attend a Managing Your Cancer Related Fatigue group learning session, see page 18.
- Watch Dr. Mike Evans’ Fatigue video <http://health.sunnybrook.ca/cancer-fatigue-content/video/>.

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

Your family members may also have issues with depression, anxiety and mood swings. They, too, will benefit from contacting their health care provider.

To learn more about depression:

- Attend a Taking Control of Your Cancer Related Sadness and Depression group learning session, see page 18.
- Visit the Depression Hurts website www.depressionhurts.ca.

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What to Expect After Cancer Treatment (*continued*)

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

Talk with a student advisor, your professors or teachers and your health care provider about how to deal with your school related concerns. For more information about returning to school after cancer treatment visit <https://www.youngadultcancer.ca/> or <https://www.teenagecancertrust.org>.

Talk with your employer, your workplace's employee health staff and your health care provider about how to deal with your work related concerns.

- Cancer and Work has a variety of 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, offered by the Canadian Cancer Society, in partnership with Wellspring Cancer Canada. Visit <https://wellspring.ca/nova-scotia> for more information and to register.

Early or Treatment Related Menopause: Women should talk to their health care provider about any changes in their periods. Cancer treatment may cause women to go into menopause or start at a younger age than usual. Women may have hot flashes, vaginal dryness, mood changes or changes in how they respond sexually. Health 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. If this is a concern for you, ask to be referred to a Social Worker who can direct you to helpful services.

Fertility issues: Cancer and cancer treatments can affect your fertility – your ability to have a baby. Ask your healthcare provider about your fertility concerns and the options that may be available to you. Fertile Futures provides fertility information and support to cancer patients and their partners, visit <https://fertilefuture.ca/>.

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What to Expect After Cancer Treatment (*continued*)

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

- Hearing loss, this can be mild, severe, or in between.
- Ringing in the ears, also called tinnitus.

Hearing loss and tinnitus can happen alone or together. They might go away after some time, or they might be lifelong.

Hearing problems can affect your quality of life. Tell your healthcare provider about any hearing changes you notice.

Heart problems: Heart problems are uncommon but serious side effects of some cancer treatments. The term “cardiac toxicity” refers to these side effects.

Only certain cancer treatments are linked with heart problems. And, there are ways to prevent or manage these side effects. Ask your Cancer Doctor if your treatment may affect your heart.

People having heart problems may have these symptoms:

- Shortness of breath.
- Lightheadedness or dizziness.
- Discomfort or pain in the chest.
- Fatigue.
- Swollen hands and/or feet.

If you notice any of these symptoms, contact your doctor right away.

To learn more visit the Canadian Cardiac Oncology Network website at <https://cardiaconcology.ca/patients/>.

Lung problems: Chemotherapy and radiation therapy to the chest may damage the lungs. Cancer survivors who received both chemotherapy and radiation therapy may have a higher risk of lung damage. Ask your cancer doctor if your treatment could have damaged your lungs.

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What to Expect After Cancer Treatment (*continued*)

Lung Problems (*continued*)

The late effects may include the following:

- A change in how well the lungs work.
- Thickening of the lining of the lungs.
- Inflammation of the lungs.
- Difficulty breathing.

People with a history of lung disease and older adults may have other lung problems.

Contact your health care provider if you notice any changes in your lung function.

Lymphedema: Arm or neck swelling (lymphedema) can occur after surgery or after radiation treatment. Signs of lymphedema include swelling or tightness of your arm, neck, shoulder or chest; a feeling of heaviness or aching in your arm. A compression garment is used to decrease the swelling.

Moderate physical exercise of your arm and moderate weight lifting or resistance training do not increase your risk of developing lymphedema. In fact, all these activities can be helpful.

If you develop lymphedema, ask your healthcare provider to refer you to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist who is certified to treat lymphedema.

If you prefer to be seen in Sydney, a referral needs to be made to the Physiotherapy Department at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre. Referrals can be from physicians or any other health care provider. For more information call **902-567-7748** and the fax number is **902-567-7869**.

To learn more about lymphedema visit the Atlantic Clinic Lymphedema Network's website, **www.atlanticlymph.ca**.

Osteoporosis (bones that break easily): Osteoporosis is common after breast cancer treatment for both women and men. Post-menopausal women and women who received aromatase inhibitor therapy are at greatest risk.

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What to Expect After Cancer Treatment (*continued*)

Osteoporosis (bones that break easily) (*continued*)

Your doctor will recommend how much calcium and vitamin D you should take each day. Regular weight-bearing exercise will help to prevent or correct osteoporosis. If you do develop osteoporosis, your doctor may suggest treatment with a type of drug called a bisphosphonate.

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. The peripheral nerves are nerves outside your brain and spinal cord (also called the central nervous system). In cancer patients, radiation therapy, chemotherapy, surgery or the cancer itself can cause nerve damage.

You may wish to review the “Peripheral Neuropathy” resource available at

<http://www.nshealth.ca/sites/nshealth.ca/files/patientinformation/nscpp1684.pdf>.

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

Common sexual health issues for both men and women include:

- Changes in desire/interest.
- Changes in orgasmic intensity.
- Body image changes.

Men may also experience erectile disorder.

Women may also experience:

- Effects of early menopause, see page 25.
- Vaginal dryness and pain.
- Changes in sexual sensitivity, such as nipple sensitivity.

Your health care provider may be able to give you guidance and support or refer you to another health care provider who can.

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What to Expect After Cancer Treatment (*continued*)

Sexual Health Issues (*continued*)

To learn more about sexual health and cancer Visit the Canadian Cancer Society's website www.cancer.ca or call their Cancer Information Helpline **1-888-939-3333**.

Books available at your local library:

- Men Cancer Sex. Anne Katz. 2010. Oncology Nursing Society.
- Women Cancer Sex. Anne Katz. 2009. Oncology Nursing Society.

Shoulder Stiffness: This is usually related to surgery to remove your lymph nodes in your armpit or radiation in that area. Gentle exercise may help. Your health care provider can suggest other options, including a referral to a physiotherapist, if the stiffness continues.

Trouble Sleeping, Anxiety, Mood Swings: It is not uncommon to have emotional distress after your cancer treatment. Your health care provider will be able to give you suggestions to manage your emotional distress.

- You may wish to attend the Taking Control of Your Cancer Related Worry and Anxiety group learning session, see page 18.
- The My Cancer Fatigue website has helpful information about sleep difficulties, visit <https://mycancerfatigue.ca/>.

Weight gain: Weight gain is not unusual after cancer treatment. Having a healthy weight, eating well and exercise are all important for your overall health. See page 14 for more information.

Living Well After Cancer

Healthy living is important after cancer treatment to decrease the risk of your cancer returning and to increase your ability to enjoy life.

Dental Health: Cancer and cancer treatment can cause dental problems. It is important that you have regular dental checkups. Your dentist will need to know that you had cancer and the type of treatments you have received. Brushing with a soft tooth brush 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://food-guide.canada.ca>.

A clinical dietician 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. Or, ask your health care provider for a referral to a dietician in your community.

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

You may want to attend the Nourish programs, offered by the Canadian Cancer Society in partnership with Wellspring Cancer Canada, in Yarmouth, Sydney, and Halifax. Call The Lodge That Gives at **902-420-1849** for more information, or visit <https://wellspring.ca/nova-scotia> for more information or to register.

You may visit your local Public Library to borrow **The Essential Cancer Treatment Nutrition Guide and Cookbook** by Jean Lamantia.

Immunizations:

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

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Living Well After Cancer (continued)

Limit or Avoid Alcohol: Discuss risks associated with alcohol use with your health care provider. Drinking alcohol increases your risk for several types of cancer. Risk increases for some kinds of cancer with as little as one drink per day. The more you drink, the more your risk increases. The risk of cancer increases regardless of what type of alcohol you drink (beer, wine, cider, spirits or liqueur). If you do drink alcohol, follow the Canadian low risk drinking guidelines. If you do not drink alcohol, don't start.

Combining smoking with alcohol increases cancer risks even greater than the cancer risks that come from drinking alcohol or smoking on their own.

To learn more about the risks of alcohol use visit <https://library.nshealth.ca/Cancer/Prevention>.

Physical Activity: Whether you are getting back to activities you enjoy or starting new ones, being active after treatment for cancer is important. Physical activity can help improve appetite, energy level and sleep. Physical activity can 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 and that you start slowly and progress gradually. It is important to always check with your health care provider about the activities and level of activity that would be best for you. Keeping in mind that often the most appropriate activity is one you enjoy doing.

Ask your health care provider if there are physical activity programs in your community specifically for people who have finished cancer treatment.

To learn more about physical activity after cancer treatment:

- Canadian Cancer Society: www.cancer.ca.
- The Canadian Society for Exercise Physiology (CSEP): www.csep.ca.
- Heart and Stroke Foundation: www.heartandstroke.com.
- Public Health Agency of Canada: www.phac-aspc.gc.ca.

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Living Well After Cancer (continued)

Protect Your Skin: Having chemotherapy or radiation can 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 at work, in your community and on vacation. Check the UV Index daily and practice sun safety as recommended. The higher the UV Index, the more protection is required. Plan 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://library.nshealth.ca/Cancer/Prevention>.

Spirituality: Many patients and caregivers identify spirituality as an important component of coping with cancer. Spirituality encompasses hope, meaning, and one's connection to a greater reality. Spiritual needs vary, depending on cultural and religious traditions. Studies show that when patients receive spiritual support, it improves their quality of life. You may find it helpful to meet with a spiritual care practitioner (also called a chaplain). You can contact a spiritual care practitioner in your community or at the Cape Breton Cancer Center or the QEII.

To learn more about spirituality after cancer treatment you may want to visit your local library to borrow *Beyond Surviving, Cancer and Your Spiritual Journey*, written by David Maginley.

Stop Using Tobacco*: Stopping tobacco use after a cancer diagnosis does make a difference. It 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 a second cancer.

It is never too late to quit tobacco. Help is available. If you want to quit, talk to your health care provider or call 811 to be connected to a trained tobacco cessation counselor who can offer assistance and counselling over the phone or direct you to a program in your area. There is no cost and no referral is required. Online resources are also available at: <https://tobaccofree.novascotia.ca/>. Quit rates are improved when both counselling and cessation aid medications are used together. Tobacco cessation drugs, such as Zyban and Champix, are covered by some private drug plans and by N.S. Pharmacare programs.

*Tobacco includes smoked tobacco (cigarettes, pipes, cigars), vaped tobacco, chewing tobacco and snuf. It does not include traditional ceremonial tobacco.

Group Learning Programs

Living Beyond Cancer: What Happens Next?

The Nova Scotia Health Authority offers a two and a half hour session that focuses on some of the key issues cancer survivors face in the months following active treatment. You may attend in person at the Bethune Ballroom, VG Site and at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre or via telehealth, at the Regional Hospital in your area. The sessions are held the last Wednesday of the month. Topics include:

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

For more information and to register call toll free **1-866-599-2267** and select option 3, or to register online please go to **www.nscancercare.ca** and click on I am a Cancer Survivor.

We now have Living Beyond Cancer video segments available to watch online. These can be found by visiting **library.nshealth.ca/cancer** and clicking on Cancer Patient Education Videos.

Your Way to Wellness

Your Way to Wellness is a provincially sponsored, free program, led by volunteer Lay Leaders. The Program is designed to help people with chronic conditions learn skills to live a healthier life. Your Way to Wellness is offered once a week for a 2 ½ hour session over six weeks. Programs are offered all over Nova Scotia.

For more information, please phone, toll free: **1-888-672-3444** or visit **<http://www.nshealth.ca/content/your-way-wellness>**.

Cancer Transitions – Sydney

Cancer Transitions is a free, 22 hour, 6 week program designed to help people make the transition from active cancer treatment to post-treatment life. The program is offered by Cape Breton Cancer Centre Staff in partnership with the YMCA.

Program leaders and guest speakers will discuss strategies for managing stress, eating well and managing your health concerns. A YMCA fitness specialist will lead you in exercises, tailored to your ability, at each session. Cancer Transitions is held in the Frank Rudderham Family YMCA, 399 Charlotte Street, Sydney. For more information and to pre-register call **902-567-8074**.

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Group Learning Programs (*continued*)

Symptom Management Group Learning Sessions

Some cancer patients and survivors experience treatment related side effects. The NSHA Cancer Care Program offers a number of group learning sessions which focus on common cancer related symptoms.

These sessions are not support groups, but participants have the opportunity to ask questions. Each session is 2 hours. Available resources and supports are discussed. Family and friends are also welcome to attend. For the date, time and location of upcoming sessions, please call **1-866-599-2267** and select option 3.

We now have video segments available to watch online. These can be found by visiting **library.nshealth.ca/cancer** and clicking on Cancer Patient Education Videos.

Managing Your Cancer Related Fatigue: Cancer related fatigue is one of the most common side effects of cancer treatment. This session provides practical information about cancer related fatigue and helpful management strategies.

Taking Control of Your Cancer Related Worry and Anxiety: Most people with cancer experience worry and some level of anxiety. This session provides practical information about cancer related anxiety and helpful coping strategies, such as deep breathing relaxation.

Taking Control of Your Cancer Related Sadness and Depression: Many people with cancer experience sadness or depression. This session provides practical information about cancer related sadness and depression and helpful coping strategies.

Coping With Cancer Related Brain Fog: Some cancer patients and survivors notice changes in their thinking and cognitive abilities during or after treatment. This is known as cancer related brain fog. This session focuses on understanding cancer related brain fog and management strategies.

Coping with Your Cancer Related Pain*: Not everyone with cancer experiences pain but many people do. This session focuses on understanding cancer related pain and management strategies such as medication, managing energy and relaxation.

*This session is only available online at **library.nshealth.ca/cancer** and click on Cancer Patient Education Videos.

Support and Resources

Cancer affects more than your body. It can have an impact on your whole life. Many people who have had cancer find that talking with a professional counselor or therapist can be very helpful. Health care providers are the experts in treating cancer, but you are the expert in the way cancer affects your life. Counseling can help you to find strength and meaning. It can also help you cope, adjust, and find solutions to problems. You can go to counseling on your own or with members of your family.

The QEII Cancer Care Program has a psychosocial cancer team for people who have been diagnosed and treated for cancer anywhere in the province of Nova Scotia. The team provides counseling to cancer patients & their families. Team members include psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, nurses and spiritual care providers.

Support can be provided to you by phone or in person. If you are having difficulty coping, you can ask your health care provider, your cancer doctor or another member of your cancer team to make a referral to a member of the QEII psychosocial cancer team.

To reach the social worker at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre please call **902-567-8551**, a referral is not required.

If you are unable to travel to Halifax or Sydney, check with your health care provider or cancer patient navigator to find out about public and private services in your area. To reach your local cancer patient navigator please call **1-866-524-1234**.

You can also call the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Helpline, **1-888-939-3333** to find out about services in your area.

Canadian Cancer Society

Cancer Information Helpline: You can call the Canadian Cancer Society's Cancer Information Helpline, **1-888-939-3333** to ask any questions you have about cancer, treatments, or research. This is a free service you can call as often as you want, to get answers to your questions.

Community Services Locator: To find out what supports and services exist in your community, go to the Canadian Cancer Society's Community Services Locator at <https://csi.cancer.ca> or call the Cancer Information Helpline listed above.

Continued on next page

Support and Resources *(continued)*

Canadian Cancer Society *(continued)*

Peer Support: The Canadian Cancer Society can connect patients or caregivers with trained volunteers who understand, because they have had cancer or cared for someone with cancer. Volunteers listen, provide hope, offer encouragement, and share ideas for coping – all from their unique perspective as “someone who has been there”. To be matched with someone you can talk with on the phone, register for Peer Match at <https://match.cancer.ca/register>.

To chat online with other people affected by cancer, register for Cancer Connection at www.cancerconnection.ca.

If you have questions about any of these services, or trouble using any of the websites, just call **1-888-939-3333**.

Wellspring Programs: The Canadian Cancer Society has partnered with Wellspring to provide free support programs in Nova Scotia. Some programs are offered in person and others are offered online and can be accessed from your home computer equipped with a microphone and camera:

- **Brain Fog** is a 9 week online educational program that teaches you how to enhance your cognitive function.
- **Nourish** is a comprehensive healthy eating program that focuses on issues of importance for people who have had cancer. The program includes cooking demonstration, food sampling and recipes to try at home. Offered in Halifax, Sydney and Yarmouth.
- **Relaxation and Visualization** is a 1.5 hour drop in program that teaches you skills to reduce stress. Offered in Halifax, Sydney and Yarmouth.
- **Returning to Work** is a 6 week online educational and support program designed to help people have a successful return to work after cancer treatment.
- **The Healing Journey** is a multi-week practical course, providing simple, yet effective and proven psychological and spiritual tools that promote inner harmony, peace and healing.

For detailed program information and to register visit <https://wellspring.ca/nova-scotia/>.

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Support and Resources *(continued)*

Private Medical Insurance and Employee Assistance Programs

Counseling 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.

Many employers offer Employee Assistance Plans which offer a limited number of free counseling sessions. Please contact your Human Resources Department for information.

Support Groups

A support group is a group of people with similar problems or concerns. Support groups meet on a regular basis. There are many different cancer support groups. Some are for the patients. Others are for the family and/or friends of the patient. Others are open to anyone. Groups may be led by a health care professional or made up completely of peers. You can find support groups that meet face-to-face or online.

It may help to talk with the person running the 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.

A support group should make you feel comfortable enough to talk about what you think and feel. If it does not, speak with the facilitator privately. You may decide it is best not to continue going. Remember that it may take time to find a group that fits.

Find a support group in your area:

- Canadian Cancer Society's Community Services Locator: **1-888-939-3333** or visit <https://csl.cancer.ca>.
- QEII Cancer Care Program in Halifax: **902-473-6067**.
- Social Worker at the Cape Breton Cancer Centre, Sydney: **902-567-8551**.
- Cancer Patient Navigators: **1-866-524-1234**.
- Ask people you know who have gone through, or who are currently dealing with cancer themselves.

Many people choose online support groups. These groups help people who may not wish to attend a face-to-face group. Be careful when looking for an online group. Anyone with internet access can create an online group, even if they do not have any qualifications.

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Support and Resources *(continued)*

Support Groups *(continued)*

If you are interested in online groups, contact **Cancer Chat Canada**, by visiting their website cancerchatcanada.ca. Canadian cancer care professionals lead these groups. Most are available in any province or territory.

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.
- **Life After Cancer Treatment.** Facing Forward Series. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institutes of Health. 2004.
- **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 Healing Circle** by Dr. Timothy Walker and Dr. Rob Rutledge. 2011.
- **The Places that Scare You: A Guide to Fearlessness in Difficult Times** by Pema Chodron.
- **When someone You Love Has Completed Cancer Treatment.** U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. National Institutes of Health. May, 2010.
- **When a Parent is Sick: Helping Parents Explain Serious Illness to Children.** Joan Hamilton, Clinical Nurse Specialist, Cancer Care, QEII, Halifax.

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Support and Resources *(continued)*

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:

- American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Patient Site: www.cancer.net.
- British Columbia Cancer Agency: 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: www.healingandcancer.org.
- National Cancer Institute (USA): www.cancer.gov.
- National Comprehensive Cancer Network: www.nccn.org/patients/resources/life_after_cancer.
- Young Adult Cancer Canada: www.youngadultcancer.ca.

LGBTQ cancer resources:

- Cancer's Margins: www.lgbtcancer.ca.
- National LGBT Cancer Project: lgbtcancer.org.
- National LGBT Cancer Network <https://cancer-network.org/cancer-information/>.
- Rainbow Health Ontario: www.rainbowhealthontario.ca.

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 Canadian resources:

- British Columbia Cancer Agency: 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: www.cancercouncil.com.au.
- Vancouver Coastal Health: <http://vch.eduhealth.ca>.

Get Involved

Cancer patients, families, and friends have unique, valuable perspectives to share about cancer care. It is important to hear from people who have experience with the cancer system in order to see what can be changed to better meet people’s needs.

You may want to get involved with the Cancer Patient Family Network (CPFN). The CPFN is a program of NSHA Cancer Care Program that connects cancer patients, survivors, family members, and friends with opportunities to improve the cancer system. As a member of the CPFN you will have opportunities to participate in focus groups and committees, complete surveys and review patient education resources.

To learn more or join the CPFN, visit www.nscancercare.ca, call toll-free **1-866-599-2267**, or e-mail CPFN@nshealth.ca.

Follow up Cancer Care Schedule

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

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Family Doctor/Nurse Practitioner Visit	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD
Every 3-4 months during Years 1-3	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD		
Every 6 months during Years 4-5	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD
	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD	YYYY/MM/DD		

Glossary

- **Benign:** A mass of cells, or tumor, that aren't cancer.
- **Cancer Screening:** The use of tests to find cancer before signs of cancer appear.
- **Chemotherapy:** Also called systemic therapy. Includes drugs that kill cancer cells by damaging or disrupting the making of the genetic code; drugs that stop the growth process of cells in an active growth phase and drugs that kill fast-growing cells throughout the body, including normal cells and cancer cells.
- **Cholesterol:** Cholesterol is a fat found in the blood. High cholesterol is one of the major controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease, heart attack and stroke.
- **Fatigue:** Severe tiredness despite getting enough sleep that limits one's ability to function.
- **Follow up testing:** A close watch by your care team for cancer using tests or tests done after treatment to check for signs that the cancer has come back.
- **Health care provider:** Typically refers to your Family Doctor or Nurse Practitioner.
- **Hormone replacement therapy:** Drugs used to increase hormone levels.
- **Hysterectomy:** Surgery that removes the womb (uterus).
- **Mammogram:** An x-ray of the breast. Also called mammography.
- **Menopause:** The point in time when a woman will experience no more menstrual periods.
- **Pap test:** A procedure in which cells are removed from the neck of the womb (cervix) to be tested for disease.
- **Prostate-specific antigen (PSA):** A protein made by the prostate.
- **Radiation:** A cancer treatment that uses high-energy radiation to kill cancer cells. It can be referred to as radiation or radiotherapy.
- **Recurrence:** When cancer returns after treatment it is called a recurrence. A cancer recurrence happens because, in spite of the best efforts of treatment to remove or kill the cancer, some very small cells from your cancer remained.
- **Screening:** Testing done on a regular basis to detect a disease in someone without symptoms, also called screening tests.
- **Side Effect:** An unhealthy physical or emotional response to treatment.
- **Symptom:** A physical sign or patient report of a health condition.

what HAPPENS now?

**Living
Beyond
Cancer**

Follow up Care for
**Cancer
Patients**