

For Parents: Life After Cancer for Your Child



Congratulations to you and your child for completing cancer treatment! It was incredibly tough, but you made it through.

After treatment, it's common and natural for you and your child to feel worried. The end of treatment brings up a number of questions about what comes next.

During this time, your child may feel a range of emotions, including:

- Frustration with physical changes caused by treatment
- Fear of their cancer returning
- Resentment for having had cancer
- Fear of being treated differently by peers and teachers
- Anxiety over making up for lost time

It's important to let your child voice these concerns. As a team, along with any support from others, you can work through these emotions.

Adapting to the end of treatment

To help your child adjust to the emotional challenges of life after treatment, consider:

- Helping them work with their care team to create a follow-up survivorship care plan and treatment plan, if needed
- Reaching out to other parents whose children have recovered from cancer
- Telling your child's care team about any concerns over returning to previous routines
- Asking care team members to help address fears of the cancer returning

You and your child may also find other difficulties in returning to your routines before cancer treatment. For example, your child may feel they've fallen behind in school. They may also think they've missed out on social activities. To help them return to these parts of life:

- Provide consistent time for play. For a younger child, this may mean scheduled play dates.
- Have them return to school as soon as they can. This may mean working with teachers to figure out any necessary accommodations.
- Get your child involved in activities that excite them. Encourage them to join a school or community club, play a sport, or practice a musical instrument if cleared by their provider.
- Promote independence by reevaluating some old rules, depending on your child's age. It's important for your child to feel they're taking control of their post-treatment life.

Helping your child become their own advocate

It's important for your child to learn how to become their own healthcare advocate. It's a skill they'll need while managing their post-treatment care into adulthood. If they're old enough to do so, help them build and maintain a survivorship care plan. This plan will serve as a vital guide toward a healthy life.

These plans can include:

- Cancer details, such as location, stage, and type
- Dates and timespans of all treatments
- Treatment details, such as the type of treatment, medicines used, and side effects
- Contact information for any treatment centers your child used
- Your child's main providers, including nutritionists, physical therapists, and counselors

A plan for follow-up care should also have proactive measures. These might include:

- Ways to manage treatment side effects
- Schedules for follow-up screenings and tests your child may need
- Any late side effects your child may have from treatment and ways to manage them
- Referrals to any specialists you may rely on

Encourage your child to take an active role in maintaining their survivorship care plan. You can do this by letting them guide conversations with care teams. Teach them to write down any side effects they may have in their plan for future reference. You may also consider letting them take control of scheduling future checkups if they are ready.

To learn more about survivorship care plans, you can use online tools such as those from the [American Society of Clinical Oncology](#).

Living a healthy life after treatment

It's true that cancer survivors have a higher risk of future health problems. But your child can lower some of these risks by moving more and practicing healthy eating habits.

Physical activity may seem daunting to you and your child after treatment. This anxiety is understandable. Remember that the most important thing is to involve your child in physical activities they enjoy. This will help them build a routine that works for them in the future. Keep movement fun by involving them in:

- Team sports
- Biking
- Hiking
- Dancing
- Swimming
- Walking or running

Talk with your child's care team before they start new physical activities, especially high risk ones such as skateboarding or contact sports. Together, you can decide which activities will work best.

When considering your child's eating habits, try to:

- Add more fruits and vegetables.
- Replace red and processed meats with lean proteins, such as poultry, seafood, and beans.
- Include whole-grain breads, pasta, and cereals made with barley and oats.
- Stay hydrated with water and low sugar juices.

Some of these foods may be costly or hard to find. But there are ways to eat healthy on a limited budget. For tips, check out [MyPlate](#).

Staying at a healthy weight is important to reduce the chance of future cancer and chronic diseases as your child gets older.

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