

Life After Cancer for Teens: Screening and Prevention



Cancer treatment is over. It's time to look ahead. That means keeping up with screenings to detect any returning or new cancers as soon as possible. It also means making healthy choices to prevent cancer from coming back.

Being nervous about the future is normal. But learning how to navigate your life after cancer can be empowering.

Screening

When treatment ends, make sure you have a summary of your treatment and a survivorship care plan. Your cancer care team can provide you with these documents. Trusted online sources like the [American Society of Clinical Oncology](#) have templates that you can use to get the information you need.

Your survivorship care plan is like a road map to help you navigate your new life. Also called a follow-up care plan, this document tells your post-cancer healthcare team all about what your cancer team did to help treat you.

The survivorship care plan will outline screenings that are important for you. The types of screening recommended depend on the type of cancer you had. They help detect long-term side effects or cancer that has returned. Common screenings may include:

- Blood tests
- Tests to check your heart and lung function
- Imaging tests, such as ultrasounds or CT scans

As you get older, your provider may advise that you have general cancer screenings, depending on your age and sex. This may include things like mammograms and a Pap test. Ask your provider what screenings are right for you.

Prevention

Unfortunately, there's no way to make sure you will always be cancer-free. The good news is that there are many steps you can take to improve your odds. Making healthy choices feels good and can keep you well. Here are some examples:

- Don't use tobacco, including cigarettes, e-cigarettes, or chewing tobacco. Tobacco use is strongly linked to cancer. If you smoked or vaped before your treatment, try not to restart. Talk with your healthcare provider if you need help fighting cravings.
- Don't drink alcohol. Drinking alcohol is linked to certain cancers. Talk with your provider if you need help to quit drinking.
- Stay fit and active through physical exercise. Movement and an active lifestyle help you feel better both physically and mentally. Ask your provider if you have any exercise restrictions.
- Protect your skin from the sun. Wear broad spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or higher. Also wear a broad-brimmed hat and lightweight clothes with long sleeves to shield your skin from harmful ultraviolet (UV) rays. Don't use tanning beds or lamps.
- Stay at a healthy weight. Eating healthy foods and getting active will help you keep extra pounds off.
- Get vaccinated. Protect yourself with the HPV (human papillomavirus) and hepatitis B vaccines. Both viruses are linked to cancer. Talk with your healthcare provider about other vaccines that are safe for you. Ask about the best time to get them after your treatment ends.

- Stay in touch with your provider. You may be tired of medical appointments, but regular visits are important for staying on top of your health.
- Use protection during sex and limit your number of sex partners. Sexually transmitted viruses like HPV and HIV can increase your chances of getting cancer.
- If you use IV (intravenous) drugs, don't share needles. HIV, as well as hepatitis B and C, can be spread through sharing needles. If you need help with an addiction to IV drugs, your healthcare team can connect you with an addiction professional.

Healthy life choices

Having a healthy diet is simpler than it may seem. Eat lots of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Cut down on processed and fast foods. Avoid sugary drinks. Consider meal planning with your family and friends—cooking and eating together can be fun.

Staying active doesn't have to be difficult either. Pick your favorite outdoor activity and make it a regular thing. It could be bicycling, hiking, or jogging. Maybe you love to dance or play a team sport. Keep moving. Your body will thank you.

Eating healthy foods and keeping fit can help you maintain a healthy weight. Not only that, but both of these healthy habits have mental health benefits, including reducing anxiety.

Your feelings are likely complicated after all you've been through. Make your mental health a priority. Anxiety and depression can lead to unhealthy choices. Don't be afraid to talk to someone, such as a counselor, about your feelings.

Getting enough sleep is an important part of having good physical and mental health. Getting at least 8 to 10 hours of sleep each night can help you function at your best.

You've been through a lot. It can be hard to jump back into a post-cancer life. This information can help.

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