
After Prostate Cancer Treatment

Get information about how to live well after prostate cancer treatment and make decisions about next steps.

Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living as a Prostate Cancer Survivor](#)
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Living as a Prostate Cancer Survivor

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For most men with prostate cancer, treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. Completing treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish

treatment, but find it hard not to worry about cancer growing or coming back. This is very common if you've had cancer.

For other men, the [cancer may come back](#)¹ in other parts of the body or [may never go away completely](#)². These men may get [hormone treatment](#)³ or other [therapies](#)⁴ to help keep the cancer under control for as long as possible. Learning to live with cancer that does not go away can be difficult and very stressful.

Follow-up care

Even if you have completed treatment, your doctors will still want to watch you closely. It's very important to go to all of your follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask questions about any problems you may be having and may do exams and lab tests or [imaging tests](#)⁵ to look for signs of cancer or treatment side effects.

Some [treatment side effects](#)⁶ might last a long time or might not even show up until years after you have finished treatment. Your doctor visits are a good time to ask questions and talk about any changes, problems, or other concerns you have.

It's important for all prostate cancer survivors, to tell their health care team about any new symptoms or problems, because they could be caused by the cancer [coming back](#)⁷ or by a new disease or second cancer.

Doctor visits and tests

Your doctor visits will usually include [PSA blood tests, possibly with digital rectal exams \(DREs\)](#)⁸ if your prostate hasn't been removed. These will probably begin within a few months of finishing treatment. How often you need follow-up visits and tests might depend to some extent on the [stage](#)⁹ of your cancer and the chance of it coming back. Most doctors recommend PSA tests about every 6 months or so for the first 5 years after treatment, and at least yearly after that. Bone scans or other imaging tests might also be done, depending on your medical situation and symptoms.

Prostate cancer can recur even many years after treatment, which is why it's important to keep regular doctor visits and report any new symptoms (such as bone pain or problems with urination).

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#)¹⁰ for you. This plan

might include:

- A summary of the treatment you received
- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests
- A schedule for other tests you might need in the future, such as [early detection \(screening\) tests for other types of cancer](#)¹¹, or tests to look for long-term health effects from your cancer or its treatment
- A list of possible late- or long-term side effects from your treatment, including what to watch for and when you should contact your doctor
- Suggestions for things you can do that might improve your health, including possibly lowering your chances of the cancer coming back

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep [health insurance](#)¹². Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and although no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

At some point after your cancer treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who doesn't know your medical history. It's important to [keep copies of your medical records](#)¹³ to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment.

Can I lower the risk of prostate cancer progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) prostate cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might [lower your risk of the cancer growing or coming back](#)¹⁴, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements. While there are some things you can do that might be helpful, more research is needed to know for sure.

Get regular physical activity

Some research has suggested that men who [exercise](#)¹⁵ regularly after treatment might be less likely to die from their prostate cancer than those who don't. It's not clear exactly how much activity might be needed, but more seems to be better. More vigorous activity might also be more helpful than less vigorous activity. Further studies are needed to follow up on these findings.

Quit smoking

Some research has suggested that men who smoke are more likely to have their prostate cancer recur and are more likely to die from it than men who don't smoke. More research is needed to see if [quitting smoking](#)¹⁶ can help lower these risks, although quitting is already known to have a number of other health benefits.

Nutrition and dietary supplements

Some studies have linked eating a diet that is high in added sugars, meat, and fat to a higher chance of dying from prostate cancer. But eating a [“Mediterranean” diet pattern](#)¹⁷ with foods such as fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, has been associated with a lower chance of dying. So eating a diet rich in fruits and vegetables and lower in animal fats might be helpful, but more research is needed to be sure. We do know that a healthy diet can have positive effects on your overall health, with benefits that extend beyond your risk of prostate or other cancers.

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)¹⁸ have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of prostate cancer progressing or coming back. In fact, some research has suggested that some supplements, such as selenium, might even be harmful. This doesn't mean that no supplements will help, but it's important to know that none have been proven to do so.

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

If the cancer comes back

If your prostate cancer comes back at some point, your treatment options will depend on where the cancer is, what types of treatment you've already had, and your health. See [Treating Prostate Cancer that Doesn't Go Away or Comes Back After Treatment](#)¹⁹. For more general information on recurrence, see [Understanding Recurrence](#)²⁰.

Second cancers after treatment

Men who've had prostate cancer can still get other cancers. In fact, prostate cancer survivors are at higher risk for getting some other types of cancer. See [Second Cancers](#)

[After Prostate Cancer](#) to learn more.

Getting emotional support

Feelings of [depression, anxiety, or worry](#)²¹ are normal when prostate cancer is a part of your life. Some men are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from [help and support](#)²² from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others.

Sexuality and feeling good about your body

Prostate cancer treatment can often affect sexual function. Learning to be comfortable with your body during and after prostate cancer treatment is a personal journey, one that is different for everyone. Information and support can help you cope with these changes over time. Learn more in [Sex and the Man With Cancer](#)²³.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/cancer-as-a-chronic-illness.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/treating/hormone-therapy.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/treating.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects.html
7. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/treating/recurrence.html
8. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html
9. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/staging.html
10. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/survivorship-care-plans.html
11. www.cancer.org/cancer/screening.html
12. www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/understanding-health-insurance.html
13. [5](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/keeping-copies-</div><div data-bbox=)

- [of-important-medical-records.html](#)
14. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html
 15. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/get-active.html
 16. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html
 17. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/acs-guidelines-nutrition-physical-activity-cancer-prevention.html
 18. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html
 19. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/treating/recurrence.html
 20. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html
 21. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes.html
 22. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html
 23. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/fertility-and-sexual-side-effects/sexuality-for-men-with-cancer.html

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Last Revised: March 16, 2022

Second Cancers After Prostate Cancer

- [Follow-up after prostate cancer treatment](#)
- [Can I lower my risk of getting a second cancer?](#)

Prostate cancer survivors can be affected by a number of health problems, but often a major concern is facing cancer again. Cancer that comes back after treatment is called a [recurrence](#)¹. But some cancer survivors may develop a new, unrelated cancer later. This is called a [second cancer](#)².

Unfortunately, being treated for prostate cancer doesn't mean you can't get another cancer. Men who have had prostate cancer can still get the same types of cancers that other men get. In fact, they might be at higher risk for certain types of cancer.

Men who have had prostate cancer can get any type of second cancer, but they have an increased risk of certain cancers, including:

- [Small intestine cancer](#)³
- [Soft tissue cancer](#)⁴
- [Bladder cancer](#)⁵
- [Thyroid cancer](#)⁶
- [Thymus cancer](#)⁷
- [Melanoma of the skin](#)⁸

Men who are treated with [radiation therapy](#)⁹ also have a higher risk of:

- [Rectal cancer](#)¹⁰
- [Acute myeloid leukemia \(AML\)](#)¹¹

This risk is probably related to the dose of radiation. Newer methods of giving radiation therapy may have different effects on the risks of a second cancer. Because these methods are newer, the long-term effects have not been studied as well.

Follow-up after prostate cancer treatment

After completing treatment for prostate cancer, you should still see your doctors regularly. Let them know about any new symptoms or problems, because they could be caused by the cancer coming back or by a new disease or second cancer.

Prostate cancer survivors should also follow the [American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer](#)¹², such as those for colorectal and lung cancer. Most experts don't recommend any other testing to look for second cancers unless you have symptoms or if you or your family have an [inherited genetic syndrome](#)¹³.

Can I lower my risk of getting a second cancer?

There are steps you can take to lower your risk and [stay as healthy](#)¹⁴ as possible. For example, prostate cancer survivors should do their best to stay away from all [tobacco products](#)¹⁵ and tobacco smoke. Smoking can increase the risk of bladder cancer, as well as increase the risk of many other cancers.

To [help maintain good health](#)¹⁶, prostate cancer survivors should also:

- Get to and stay at a healthy weight
- Keep physically active and limit the time you spend sitting or lying down
- Follow a healthy eating pattern that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and limits or avoids red and processed meats, sugary drinks, and highly processed foods
- Not drink [alcohol](#)¹⁷. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men

These steps may also lower the risk of some other health problems.

See [Second Cancers in Adults](#)¹⁸ to learn a lot more about the causes of second cancers.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/small-intestine-cancer.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/soft-tissue-sarcoma.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/thyroid-cancer.html
7. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/thymus-cancer.html
8. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/melanoma-skin-cancer.html
9. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/treating/radiation-therapy.html
10. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer.html
11. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/acute-myeloid-leukemia.html
12. www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html
13. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/what-causes.html
14. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment.html
15. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html
16. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity.html
17. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/alcohol-use-and-cancer.html
18. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html

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Last Revised: June 9, 2020

Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team
(<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html>)

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