Lung Cancer - Non-Small Cell - Survivorship [1]

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ON THIS PAGE: You will read about how to with challenges in everyday life after a cancer diagnosis. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

What is survivorship?

The word survivorship means different things to different people. Two common definitions include:

- Having no signs of cancer after finishing treatment.
- The process of living with, through, and beyond cancer. According to this definition, cancer survivorship begins at diagnosis and includes people who continue to have treatment over the long term, to either reduce the risk of recurrence or to manage chronic disease.

In some ways, survivorship is one of the most complex aspects of the cancer experience because it is different for every person.

Survivors may experience a mixture of strong feelings, including joy, concern, relief, guilt, and fear. Some people say they appreciate life more after a cancer diagnosis and have gained a greater acceptance of themselves. Others become very anxious about their health and uncertain of how to cope with everyday life.

Survivors may feel some stress when frequent visits to the health care team end following treatment. Often, relationships built with the cancer care team provide a sense of security during treatment, and people miss this source of support. This may be especially true as new worries and challenges surface over time, such as any late effects of treatment, emotional challenges including fear of recurrence, sexuality and fertility concerns, and financial and workplace issues.

Every survivor has individual concerns and challenges. With any challenge, a good first step is being able to recognize your fears and talk about them. Effective coping requires:

- Understanding the challenge you are facing,
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Thinking through solutions,

- Asking for and allowing the support of others, and
- Feeling comfortable with the course of action you choose.

Many survivors find it helpful to join an in-person support group or an online community of survivors. This allows you to talk with people who have had similar first-hand experiences. Other options for finding support include talking with a friend or member of your health care team, individual counseling, or asking for assistance at the learning resource center of the center where you received treatment.

Changing role of caregivers

Family members and friends may also go through periods of transition. A caregiver plays a very important role in supporting a person diagnosed with cancer, providing physical, emotional, and practical care on a daily or as-needed basis. Many caregivers become focused on providing this support, especially if the treatment period lasts for many months or longer.

However, as treatment is completed, the caregiver's role often changes. Eventually, the need for caregiving related to the cancer diagnosis will become much less or come to an end. Caregivers can learn more about adjusting to life after caregiving in this article [3].

A new perspective on your health

For many people, survivorship serves as a strong motivator to make positive lifestyle changes.

Nothing helps recovery more than stopping smoking [4]. There are many tools and approaches available. Be sure to get help from your family, friends, nurses, and doctors?it is difficult to stop on your own.

People recovering from lung cancer are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health, such as not smoking, limiting alcohol, eating well, and managing stress. Regular physical activity can help rebuild your strength and energy level. Recovering patients, even those using oxygen, are encouraged to walk for 15 to 30 minutes each day to improve their heart and lung functioning. Your health care team can help you create an appropriate exercise plan based upon your needs, physical abilities, and fitness level. Learn more about making healthy lifestyle choices [5].

In addition, it is important to have recommended medical check-ups and tests (see Follow-up Care [6]) to take care of your health. Cancer rehabilitation may also be recommended, and this could mean any of a wide range of services such as physical therapy, career counseling, pain management, nutritional planning, and/or emotional counseling. The goal of rehabilitation is to help people regain control over many aspects of their lives and remain as independent and productive as possible.

Talk with your doctor to develop a survivorship care plan that is best for your needs.

Looking for More Survivorship Resources?

For more information about cancer survivorship, explore these related items. Please note these links will take you to other sections of Cancer.Net:

- ***ASCO Answers* Cancer Survivorship Guide** [7]: This 44-page booklet (available as a PDF) helps people transition into life after treatment. It includes blank treatment summary and survivorship care plan forms.

- **Cancer.Net Patient Education Video** [8]: View a short video led by an ASCO expert that provides information about what comes next after finishing treatment.

- **Survivorship Resources** [9]: Cancer.Net offers an entire area of this website with resources to help survivors, including for survivors in different age groups.

The next section offers Questions to Ask the Doctor [10] *to help start conversations with your cancer care team. Or, use the menu on the side of your screen to choose another section to continue reading this guide.*

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/lung-cancer-non-small-cell/survivorship
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/24738
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/28476
[5] http://www.cancer.net/node/24554
[6] http://www.cancer.net/node/19159
[7] http://www.cancer.net/sites/cancer.net/files/cancer_survivorship.pdf
[8] http://www.cancer.net/node/27371
[9] http://www.cancer.net/node/22
[10] http://www.cancer.net/node/19161