# Melanoma - After Treatment [1]

**This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [2], 06/2014**

**ON THIS PAGE**: You will read about your medical care after cancer treatment is finished and why this follow-up care is important. To see other pages, use the menu on the side of your screen.

After active treatment for melanoma ends, talk with your doctor about developing a follow-up care plan, called surveillance and monitoring. This plan may include regular physical and dermatologic (skin) examinations and/or medical tests to monitor your recovery for the coming months and years. The purpose of monitoring is to detect a recurrence or spread of the disease, as well as a new primary melanoma. The most important parts of surveillance are your medical history and physical exams.

The follow-up and surveillance program for a person with a history of melanoma is based on a person?s risk of recurrence, is highly individualized, and can vary from person to person. ASCO offers cancer treatment summary forms [3] to help keep track of the cancer treatment you received and develop a survivorship care plan once treatment is completed.

In general, physical and dermatologic examinations are performed every three to six months for the first two to three years and then once a year after that. However, your doctor may recommend a different follow-up schedule. A chest x-ray, CT scan, MRI, and/or PET/CT scan can be considered for screening of patients with higher risk melanoma. For people treated for early-stage disease, scans are not generally recommended for routine surveillance.

Routine screening with a skin examination for a new melanoma and non-melanoma skin cancer is a necessary part of follow-up care, as is sun protection and sun avoidance. Screening for melanoma and other skin cancers may include mole mapping (photography of the moles) by a doctor or other health care professional. If possible, the patient should receive copies of their photographs and education in skin self-examination. There is growing evidence that individuals followed using photographs have melanomas diagnosed at an earlier stage.

Protecting your skin from UV radiation is important to help prevent second skin cancers, either melanoma or non-melanoma skin cancer. Many people who are treated for melanoma lead an active, outdoor lifestyle, but it is important to take steps to protect yourself from further skin damage. Participating in outdoor activities before 10:00 AM or after 4:00 PM and wearing long sleeves, pants, a broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of at least 30, UV-protective

sunglasses, and a hat help protect against further sun damage. A major consideration following diagnosis and treatment of melanoma is adjusting a person?s lifestyle to use sun protective or sun avoidance measures at all times, as well as avoiding artificial tanning. In addition, if a person is working in an area where there is high UV exposure, there may be occupation-related issues. Learn more about protecting your skin from the sun [4].

For an early-stage, thin melanoma, the surgery is most often outpatient surgery, with little need for rehabilitation. With a thicker melanoma and possible skin grafts, depending on the location, there may be some need for rehabilitation [5] following treatment. As explained in the Side Effects [6] section, some patients experience lymphedema [7] or chronic pain; talk with your doctor about how these can be managed.

People recovering from melanoma are encouraged to follow established guidelines for good health, such as maintaining a healthy weight, not smoking, eating a balanced diet, and having recommended cancer screening tests. Talk with your doctor to develop a plan that is best for your needs. Moderate physical activity can help rebuild your strength and energy level. Your doctor can help you create an appropriate exercise plan based upon your needs, physical abilities, and fitness level. Learn more about the next steps to take in survivorship [8], including making positive lifestyle changes [9].

*The next section offers a list of questions you may want to ask. Use the menu on the side of your screen to select Questions to Ask the Doctor, or you can select another section, to continue reading this guide.*

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**Links:**
[1] http://www.cancer.net/cancer-types/melanoma/after-treatment
[2] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[3] http://www.cancer.net/node/25394
[4] http://www.cancer.net/node/24659
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