

## **Sarcoma, Soft Tissue - After Treatment** [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 07/2014

**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 treatment for sarcoma ends, talk with your doctor about developing a follow-up care plan. This plan may include regular physical examinations and/or medical tests to monitor your recovery for the coming months and years.

Regularly scheduled follow-up visits with the doctors involved in your treatment are important to find a possible tumor recurrence and to help manage and, hopefully, prevent some side effects related to treatment. A common follow-up schedule includes visits every three to four months for the first three years after treatment, visits every six months until five years after treatment, and annual visits thereafter. Chest x-rays or CT scans will be done regularly during these follow-up visits to look for possible spread of cancer to the lungs. Imaging tests are also sometimes performed on the area where the tumor began. These tests may include an MRI, ultrasound, CT scan, and/or PET scan.

People who have been treated for sarcoma should talk with their doctor about any new symptoms, such as a cough, pain, or a new lump. It may be a sign of a cancer recurrence, a late effect of treatment, or a problem unrelated to cancer. If a recurrence happens, it is likely to occur within the first two years, but some sarcomas can recur much later.

For people who received radiation therapy, the region of the body that received radiation therapy can be at risk for limb swelling, called [lymphedema](#) [3]; fracture of the thigh or leg bones; poor mobility of joints; and hardness of the soft tissues, called fibrosis. Rarely, another sarcoma that is different from the original tumor may develop as a result of radiation therapy. Talk with your doctor to learn ways to prevent and/or manage these side effects. For example, lymphedema can be managed with compression stockings and other special therapies; bone fractures may be prevented by avoiding certain high-impact exercises; joint mobility can be improved with a rehabilitation program; and fibrosis may be lessened with several months of treatment with a combination of vitamin E and pentoxifylline, another oral medication. In addition, skin that received radiation therapy should be regularly [protected from sun exposure](#) [4] with clothing or sunscreen to reduce the chance of skin cancer developing in that area.

For patients treated for sarcoma in an arm or leg, a rehabilitation program after surgery or radiation therapy can help the patient regain or maintain limb function. Range-of-motion exercises, strengthening exercises, and a program to reduce lymphedema may be recommended. A rehabilitation medicine specialist can help patients receive the most appropriate rehabilitation after treatment. The majority of patients with a sarcoma in an arm or leg can be successfully treated and maintain good limb function. However, when treatment included amputation, services that provide artificial limbs, called prosthetics, and additional mental health support can help manage the adjustment to life following the loss of a limb. Learn more about [rehabilitation](#) [5].

ASCO offers [cancer treatment summary forms](#) [6] to help keep track of the cancer treatment you received and develop a survivorship care plan once treatment is completed.

People recovering from sarcoma 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](#) [7], including making [positive lifestyle changes](#) [8].

*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/sarcoma-soft-tissue/after-treatment>

[2] <http://www.cancer.net/about-us>

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25250>

[4] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24659>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25397>

[6] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25394>

[7] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25400>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24554>