Returning to School After Treatment

This section has been reviewed and approved by the Cancer.Net Editorial Board [1], December / 2011

Before you return to school, you and your parents may want to contact the principal, the school nurse, your guidance counselor, and your teachers to discuss the transition. Talk about some of the following topics before returning to school:

- Attendance , especially if you will still be going to doctors' appointments
- Permission to wear a hat or scarf in school if your hair hasn't grown back yet and you prefer to keep your head covered
- Activities that you may not be ready for yet, such as gym class
- The possibility of having fewer classes

School and learning

If you find that school is harder than it used to be or you have more difficulty keeping up with your schoolwork, ask for help. Some cancers and treatments can make it harder to concentrate, remember things, understand what you read, or write, which can make it difficult to keep up in class. Some of these problems may be temporary, but some may last longer.

Not everyone will have difficulties with learning after cancer treatment, but if you notice a difference in how you learn after treatment, there are things you can do. Talk openly with your parents and doctor about these symptoms. They can help you work with your teachers and guidance counselor to help you adjust to these changes. For example, teachers may let you take more time during tests, use a computer to take notes, or record classes.

School and your classmates

Here are some tips that may help you prepare for the first few days back at school:

- Consider asking a parent, your counselor, or a teacher to talk with your classmates before you come back.
- If you decide to tell your classmates yourself, ask your teacher(s) to arrange a time during class when you can tell everyone what's been going on.
- Think about visiting school for a couple of half-days or for a few hours before going back full-time.
- Ask a friend or two to meet you outside school on your first few days back, so you don't have to walk in alone.
- Be prepared for questions and know what you are going to say.
- Be prepared for insensitive comments or questions, and try not to let them upset you.

Read more suggestions on interacting with your classmates [2] and friends [3] when you have cancer.

Take it slow

It's natural to want to jump right in and get back to your normal school schedule, but going back to school can be tiring. Take it easy at first and don't overdo things; your health is the most important priority.

More Information

ASCO Expert Corner: Returning to School After Cancer [4]

Cancer in Teens [5]

Additional Resources

Teens Living With Cancer: Back to School [6]

Links:
[1] http://www.cancer.net/about-us
[2] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens/Family%2C+Friends%2C+and+School/Cancer+and+School/Cancer+and+School
[3] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens/Family%2C+Friends%2C+and+School/Cancer+and+Your+Friends/Cancer+and+Your+Friends
[4] http://www.cancer.net/vgn-ext-templating/v/index.jsp?vgnextoid=b09be05611d54110VgnVCM100000ed730ad1RCRD
[5] http://www.cancer.net/patient/Coping/Age-Specific+Information/Cancer+in+Teens
[6] http://www.teenslivingwithcancer.org/i-can-deal-with-it/school-issues/going-back-to-school/