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[Returning to School or Work After Cancer](#) [1]

This section has been reviewed and approved by the [Cancer.Net Editorial Board](#) [2], 08/2015



Watch the [Moving Forward video on School Concerns](#) [3], adapted from this content.

After treatment for cancer, many young adults often look forward to returning to school or work. It offers several opportunities and challenges separate from cancer, such as:

- Reconnecting with colleagues and friends
- Focusing on something other than cancer
- Getting involved in interesting and challenging projects
- Regaining a sense of “normal”

Returning to school

This time of transition that may feel overwhelming. However, preparation may ease your anxiety. Consider taking the following steps:

- **Preparing ahead of time.** When planning to return to school, you may need to meet with

staff at your school to arrange for your return. Here are more details to help you get started:

- Meet with school advisors who can help coordinate your return to school. They can also help you explore available health, financial aid, and career planning resources.
 - Meet with an academic advisor to discuss your course choices and progress toward your degree.
 - Schedule a meeting with the medical staff in the student health center to discuss your cancer treatment, current health status, and expected needs for follow-up care.
 - Address any learning and classroom difficulties. Federal laws, including the [Americans With Disabilities Act](#) [4] (ADA), allow students with disabilities to receive special accommodations. These may include extended time to complete tests, audio textbooks, free tutoring, or modified housing. To receive these accommodations, the student must first make a request, and all disabilities must be documented by a medical professional.
- **Making the adjustment.** It is natural to want to jump right in and get back to your normal schedule. However, going back to school can be physically and emotionally tiring. Take it easy for a while, and don't overdo things. Your health is still the most important priority. Here are some recommendations for making a smooth adjustment back to school:
 - Think about visiting school before going back full time or part time. For example, attend a few parties or campus events, or spend some time with your friends on campus.
 - Ask your friends to fill you in on any changes on campus. And, ask someone to meet you on campus the first few days.
 - Be prepared for questions about your cancer experience and know what you are going to say. Also, be prepared for insensitive comments or questions. Try not to take these comments personally.
 - Consider joining a [support group](#) [5] for young adults with cancer who may share similar experiences.

Returning to work

If you have taken time off from work for cancer treatment, returning may seem both exciting and overwhelming. Consider taking the following steps:

- Get to know your workplace rights and responsibilities. This will help you plan the details of your return to work and prepare appropriate responses to challenges you may face.
 - [Family Medical Leave Act \(FMLA\)](#) [6] allows up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave in a 12-month period.
 - [The Americans with Disabilities Act \(ADA\)](#) [7] requires that your employer provide "reasonable accommodations" to allow you to do your job. Learn more about [cancer and workplace discrimination](#) [8].
- Talk with your doctor about whether you are ready to return to work.
- Find out if your employer has a formal "return-to-work" or disability management program. Also, ask about flexible work options, job accommodations you may need, and your insurance and benefits coverage.
- Decide what you want to tell your coworkers and how. You may decide to have private conversations with a few close coworkers. Or you may find it easier to tell everyone at the same time during a meeting.
- If you are having difficulty making the transition back to work, talk with a [counselor](#) [9] or join a [support group](#) [5] to learn from the experiences of other young adult cancer survivors.

Learn more about [going back to work after cancer](#) [10].

More Information

[Finding a Job After Cancer](#) [11]

[Resources for Young Adults](#) [12]

Additional Resources

[Cancer and Careers](#) [13]

[Job Accommodation Network](#) [14]

Links

[1] <http://www.cancer.net/navigating-cancer-care/young-adults/returning-school-or-work-after-cancer>

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

[3] <http://www.cancer.net/multimedia/videos/young-adults-cancer/school>

[4] <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm>

[5] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25383>

[6] <http://www.dol.gov/whd/regs/compliance/whdfs28.htm>

[7] <http://www.ada.gov/>

[8] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25298>

[9] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24699>

[10] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24549>

[11] <http://www.cancer.net/node/24524>

[12] <http://www.cancer.net/node/25218>

[13] <http://www.cancerandcareers.org/>

[14] <http://askjan.org/>