

Congratulations on completing your cancer treatment!

While this is a milestone to celebrate, it also represents a new beginning in how to best care for yourself after treatment. The reality is that while you might be cancer-free, you are not free of cancer. Once diagnosed with cancer your treatment becomes a part of your medical history that will influence how you manage your healthcare going forward. Improvements in cancer treatments have allowed many cancers to be managed as chronic conditions that need coordinated follow-up. Simply put, a diagnosis of cancer changes your health care needs for the rest of your life.

As a cancer survivor you may face several challenges in the years following your treatment including:

- Cancer recurrence: a reappearance of the original cancer
- Second malignancy: development of a new and entirely different cancer
- Effects of organ damage: damage to organs such as the heart, lungs, ovaries, testicles, bone marrow, etc.
- Emotional and social issues: some of the most common include stress and depression, employment discrimination and access to adequate health insurance

Although research in the field of cancer survivorship is underway, little is currently known about how to diagnose, prevent and screen for the late effects of cancer. This means that it is extremely important for you to be your own healthcare advocate. Below is information about assuring access to the highest quality care after cancer treatment.

Survivorship Care Plan

Upon completing treatment request a formal consultation with your doctor and ask him/her for a Cancer Care Summary (a summary of your diagnosis and treatment) and a Survivorship Care Plan (a plan for follow-up care after primary cancer treatment).

Your Cancer Care Summary and Survivorship Care Plan should include, but is not limited to:

- Your cancer diagnosis, treatments received (including names of the drugs and dosages) and their potential known long-term effects;
- Specific information about the timing and content of recommended follow-up (for example, screening tests for recurrences and/or secondary cancers, follow-up visits with your oncologist, etc.);
- Recommendations about preventative practices and how to maintain health and well-being (for example, nutrition, exercise and emotional support);
- Information on employment rights as a cancer survivor and access to health insurance;
- Availability of emotional support services in the local community.

During the consultation ask your doctor and/or nurse to explain this Cancer Care Summary and Survivorship Care Plan to you. It is important that you understand it. You should keep it in a safe place where you store other important personal documents and provide copies to all other healthcare providers who examine you in the months and years to come.

Emotional and Social Issues

The *emotional stress* that cancer causes can take many forms: anxiety, anger, depression, frustration and grief are all very common. In fact, researchers have found that 1/3 of people with a cancer diagnosis experience anxiety and depression serious enough to require professional help. It is normal to feel some level of emotional stress even after you finish your cancer treatment. Don't be afraid or embarrassed to seek help.



After treatment many survivors experience *employment discrimination*. Fortunately, federal laws offer cancer survivors protections from discriminatory practices such as firing or a denial of benefits after a cancer diagnosis. Learn about your employment rights as a cancer survivor. NCCS offers a publication entitled *Working It Out: Your Employment Rights As A Cancer Survivor*, which you can download or order from www.canceradvocacy.org. In addition, many communities have organizations that offer counseling and guidance in regards to employment related issues.

Access to adequate and affordable *health insurance* can also be a challenge for cancer survivors. Since state laws regulate many of the issues related to health insurance it is important that you seek out and familiarize yourself with local organizations that can provide counseling and guidance about health insurance. NCCS offers a publication for survivors entitled, *What Cancer Survivors Need to Know About Health Insurance*, which you can download or order from www.canceradvocacy.org. Many communities also have organizations that offer help in navigating the field of health insurance.

Take Action

You don't have to be an activist to be a good advocate for yourself and for others. At NCCS we believe that the more educated you become about survivorship issues, the more empowered you will feel, and you may one day write a letter, pay a visit, or make a phone call to your local and national elected officials to let them know your concerns about these issues. One way to make sure your voice is heard is to join NCCS's grassroots legislative network *Cancer Advocacy Now!*™ at www.canceradvocacynow.org. As a *Cancer Advocacy Now!*™ member you can learn about the actions we are taking to change the way our nation researches, regulates, finances and delivers cancer care. Remember, you can make a difference both for yourself and for others.

about NCCS

resources

Cancer Survival Toolbox®

To learn more about survivorship issues and challenges following treatment—such as physical effects, sexuality and fertility, family relationships, financial planning, health directives and living with hope—you can listen to module 10 of NCCS's Cancer Survival Toolbox®, *Living Beyond Cancer* at www.cancersurvivaltoolbox.org.

The Cancer Survival Toolbox is a free, self-learning audio CD program written and reviewed by cancer survivors for cancer survivors to help you develop skills to meet and understand the challenges of your illness. In addition to listening to the program online, you can order a free copy in English, Spanish or Chinese (transcript only) by calling 1.877.TOOLS.4.U.

Institutes of Medicine's Report: *From Cancer Patient to Cancer Survivor: Lost in Transition*

In November 2005 the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies released a report on adult cancer survivorship. The report examines some of the long-term medical and social consequences of cancer treatment and survival; assesses the quality care provided to those living with, through and beyond cancer and provides policy recommendations to improve the care of cancer survivors. To learn more about the report visit www.iom.edu.

NCCS is the oldest survivor-led cancer advocacy organization in the country and a highly respected authentic voice at the federal level, advocating for quality cancer care for all Americans and empowering cancer survivors to advocate for themselves. For more information about NCCS and its advocacy for quality cancer care, please visit www.canceradvocacy.org or call 1.877.NCCS.YES.

Support NCCS

To find out more about how you can support NCCS and our efforts to help cancer survivors by making a tax-deductible donation please visit our Web site at www.canceradvocacy.org or contact us toll-free at 877.NCCS.YES.

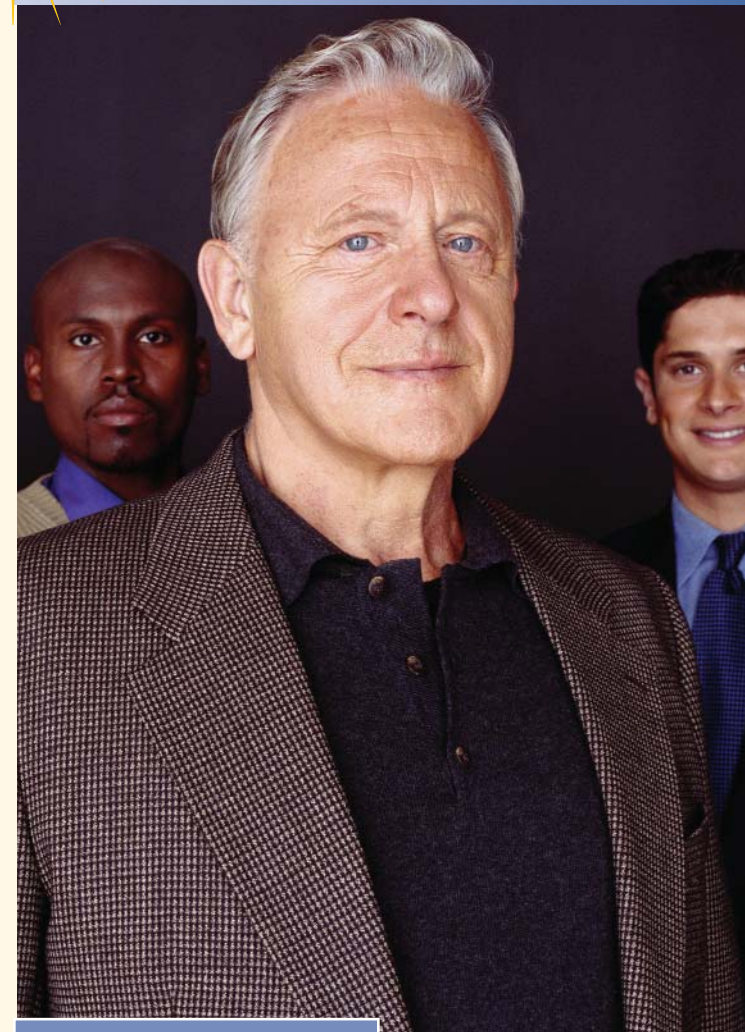
You can also support NCCS through workplace charity campaigns such as United Way, Independent Charities of America or Combined Federal Campaign. Look for us under Cancer Survivors Coalition (NCCS) or write in National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship, Silver Spring, MD 20910.



The power of survivorship. The promise of quality care.

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**Your Life After
Cancer Treatment**



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