



## Talking with Your Primary Care Doctor After Cancer Treatment

### 1. Before Leaving the Care of the Oncology Team

- a. **Get a treatment summary.** Should provide a detailed list of all treatments you received.
- b. **Make sure you have a copy of all of your cancer-related medical test results** and/or get a copy of all medical test results sent to your primary care provider (PCP). You may need to talk to your team to find out how to request all information for your PCP.
- c. **Get a 'long term care plan'.** Your cancer care team should provide you with this before you are discharged from their care. The plan should describe the types of things you need to look out for in the near and distant future. It may also include recommended screenings and other information specific to patients with your type of cancer/types of treatment.

### 2. Items to Discuss with Your Primary Care Doctor

To best serve you, your primary care provider will need access to all of your cancer-related medical information. It is a very good idea to make sure that you and your PCP are 'on the same page' with respect to your follow-up care. The list presented here includes some of the most common things that patients should consider discussing with their doctors.

- a. **How and when will you be screened for a recurrence of your cancer?**  
You should have a plan in place for regular checkups and relevant screening exams.
- b. **How and when will you be screened for secondary cancers?**  
Because some cancer treatments raise the risk of other, *new* cancers (secondary cancers), it is important to know what to look for.
- c. **How will you be treated for long-term side effects?**  
Some cancer treatments can lead to side effects that can last a very long time. An example is the pain/burning (neuropathy) caused by nerve damage due to some kinds of chemotherapy.
- d. **How will you be checked for late effects?**  
Some cancer treatments may cause side effects that do not show up for months or years after the treatment stops. An example is heart damage caused by some chemotherapy drugs.

e. **Sexuality**

Some cancer treatments can impact sexual performance and/or desire. These include hormonal treatments for breast and prostate cancer, and surgery that impacts sexual functioning. Body image is also a major concern for some cancer survivors, as surgery can leave them feeling unattractive. Sexuality is part of the human experience, and it is important to address any issues, psychological or physical.

f. **Lifestyle changes**

Items to consider include diet, exercise, alcohol consumption, and cessation of tobacco usage. If you do not currently exercise regularly, a plan should be created to maximize the benefits and minimize any risks.

g. **Fertility**

Cancer treatments can impact the ability of a survivor to have a child. If this is something that you are considering, you should talk with your physician about any concerns or risks.

h. **Integrative Oncology**

Many cancer survivors utilize integrative oncology treatments/practices. These include yoga, Tai Chi, herbal supplements, 'food therapy', and acupuncture. Unfortunately, most patients do not discuss these practices with their doctors. That is a mistake!

It is important that all supplements and other treatments are documented and discussed. There is good evidence that some treatments can have beneficial effects, but some herbal remedies can interfere with medications or have other effects that need to be addressed. Natural does NOT mean safe.

If you are using or considering a complementary medicine approach, discuss this with your physician.

i. **Emotional and psychological issues**

Cancer is stressful!!! The impacts can last a lifetime. It is very common for cancer survivors to suffer from depression and anxiety. Make sure that you discuss this with your physician and seek appropriate counseling/medication when it is warranted. Addressing psychological concerns is as important as dealing with physical issues.

j. **Clinical trials in survivorship**

Although not as common as treatment trials, there ARE clinical trials that are designed to address challenges faced by cancer survivors. You should consider identifying and joining these types of trials in your area.