



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## Coping with Soft-Tissue Sarcoma

If you've recently been diagnosed with soft-tissue sarcoma, you probably have many questions and concerns. This fact sheet is intended to help you learn about this type of cancer, find answers to your questions, and find sources of support.

### What is soft-tissue sarcoma?

Soft-tissue sarcoma is a rare type of cancer that begins in the body's soft tissues such as muscles, fat, tendons, and nerves – tissues that connect or support other body parts.

### How is soft-tissue sarcoma treated?

Soft-tissue sarcoma may be treated with surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, or a combination of these approaches. At one time amputation was the standard treatment for sarcoma in a limb, but today most sarcomas in a limb can be treated with *limb-sparing surgery*. In this type of surgery, the surgeon cuts out the tumor and an inch or so of tissue around it.

Many chemotherapy drugs may be used to treat soft-tissue sarcoma. The choice of drugs depends on many factors, including what subtype of soft-tissue sarcoma you have. Drugs that may be used to treat soft-tissue sarcoma include Taxotere (docetaxel), Adriamycin (doxorubicin) and many others.

### Self-care tips

**Find a specialist.** Because soft-tissue sarcoma is so rare, most doctors who treat people with cancer don't see it often. Look for a doctor who specializes in treating sarcoma.

**Get a second opinion.** Soft-tissue sarcoma is a rare cancer with many subtypes. Getting the diagnosis right can be challenging. Consider getting a second opinion on your diagnosis from a pathologist (a specialist in diagnosing cancer) who specializes in sarcoma.

**Work with a team.** You will get the best care at a center where doctors have expertise in treating soft-tissue sarcoma and where specialists in different kinds of cancer treatment work together with nurses, dietitians, social workers, and other health care professionals. For a list of such centers visit: <http://cancercenters.cancer.gov>



### Soft-tissue sarcoma in children and young adults

Although soft-tissue sarcoma is rare, it is one of the more common types of cancer in children and young adults. The most frequently diagnosed type of soft-tissue sarcoma in children is called *rhabdomyosarcoma*. This is a cancer that occurs in the muscles. Hycamptin (topotecan) is one of the chemotherapy drugs that may be used to treat children with this type of cancer.

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**Be an active partner in your treatment.** You are a key member of your health care team. Be sure you understand the treatment plan your doctor is recommending. Don't hesitate to share your needs and concerns with your doctors and others on your health care team.

**Be good to yourself.** Cancer treatment is stressful. Try to get as much rest as you need. Talk with your health care team about what kind of exercise you can safely do. Staying active may help you feel less tired and better able to cope. Connect with sources of strength, which may include faith, prayer, and meditation.

## Finding support

**Reach out to family and friends.** Family and friends are an important part of your support system. Allow them to show their concern for you by helping out in practical ways such as taking on household chores, driving you to medical appointments, and listening when you need to talk.

**Talk with a counselor.** If you're feeling sad or worried about the future, know that you're not alone. Many people with cancer have these feelings. You may find it helpful to share these concerns with an oncology social worker or counselor.



**Connect with others.** A support group connects you with others going through a similar situation. You can share experiences and learn from each other. CancerCare's professional oncology social workers lead support groups and provide individual counseling free of charge.

**Seek out support services.** Community groups that provide support for people with cancer may be able to offer volunteer drivers, respite care, and other services. A social worker may be able to help you connect with support services in your community.

## CancerCare Can Help

If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with soft-tissue sarcoma, contact CancerCare. We are a national nonprofit organization that provides free, professional support services for anyone affected by cancer. Our services include individual counseling, support groups, education, financial help, and referrals to other resources. To learn more, call us at **1-800-813-HOPE (4673)** or visit [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org).

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