



CANCERcare®

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# fact sheet

## COPING WITH THE FEAR OF RECURRENCE

**For cancer survivors, fear of recurrence (the cancer returning) is a common concern. There are many ways in which you can manage this anxiety in order to live a full and meaningful life.**

### FIND BALANCE

Around the time of your check-up, blood tests or a milestone or anniversary, you may feel sad, irritable or anxious. Allowing yourself to acknowledge and accept your feelings is the first step. Developing ways to manage these feelings is important as well as to be kind to yourself. To be kind to yourself is to live in the now and find ways to balance your fear of recurrence with enjoying your life and the hope for continued wellness.

**Relieve stress.** Find things to do that are comforting such as meditation, a yoga class, writing in a journal or spending time with your pet. A helpful tool in self-care is to identify what activities are soothing and to do these activities when needed in times of stress.

**Making healthy choices can help people feel emotionally and physically strong.** Getting enough sleep, maintaining a healthy diet and engaging in physical activities can also provide a sense of control.

**Talk to your friends or family members about your concerns.** Even if there are just one or two people with whom you feel comfortable sharing your fears, this can be a powerful way to get some relief from your anxiety.

**Reflect on what makes your life meaningful, both before and after cancer.** What values and activities are important to you? How can you continue to honor those things you hold dear? Focusing on the bigger picture can help minimize anxiety and assist you with what you can do to live a full life in the here and now.



### BE INFORMED

Stay actively involved in your follow-up care by asking your doctor specific questions about the likelihood of recurrence. Discuss what you can do to minimize your chances of recurrence. Talk with your doctor what your follow-up care plan will be. This should include:

- A description of your state of health at the end of treatment
- A future schedule of visits (time and date)
- Who will deliver follow-up care and where
- Tests that will be done and why they are needed
- What long-term effects might occur (such as swelling or numbness in the limbs, pain or depression), how to watch for them and how they will be treated
- Symptoms to watch for that might signal a return of your cancer
- Steps you can take to adopt a more healthy lifestyle

(over)

## EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

### **Many cancer survivors find support groups very helpful.**

Support groups allow you to share your feelings and learn how others are coping with their fears of recurrence, which can provide you with a community of strength and understanding. CancerCare offers free face-to-face, telephone and online support groups led by professional oncology social workers.

Individual counseling provides a safe space to voice concerns. Cancer survivors have fears of recurrence and other anxieties that friends as well as loved ones may not fully understand. The process of openly exploring emotions with a professional counselor helps many people feel less anxious. An oncology social worker at CancerCare can suggest ways to manage your anxiety and help you process your feelings.

## RESOURCES

### **National Children's Cancer Society**

314-241-1600

[www.thenccs.org](http://www.thenccs.org)

### **National Coalition for Cancer Survivorship**

888-650-9127

[www.canceradvocacy.org](http://www.canceradvocacy.org)

### **The Samfund for Young Adult Survivors of Cancer**

866-439-9365

[www.thesamfund.org](http://www.thesamfund.org)

## **CancerCare® Can Help**

Founded in 1944, CancerCare is the leading national organization providing free support services and information to help people manage the emotional, practical and financial challenges of cancer. Our comprehensive services include counseling and support groups over the phone, online and in-person, educational workshops, publications and financial and co-payment assistance. All CancerCare services are provided by professional oncology social workers and world-leading cancer experts.

To learn more, visit [www.cancercare.org](http://www.cancercare.org) or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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