



CANCERcare®

800-813-HOPE (4673)
info@cancerca.org
www.cancerca.org

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 when a milestone or anniversary is approaching, you may feel sad, irritable or anxious. Allowing yourself to acknowledge and accept your feelings is the first step to finding balance. Developing ways to manage these feelings is extremely important and a way to be kind to yourself. An important act of kindness to yourself is to live in the now and enjoy your life. Here are a few ways to balance your fear of recurrence with the hope for continued wellness.

Relieve stress. Find things to do that are comforting to you, such as meditation, a yoga class, writing in a journal or spending time with your pet. Whatever the activity, it is important to have something soothing to do so you can calm yourself when you need to.



Make healthy choices to help yourself 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 remind you what you can do in the here and now to live a full life.

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. You should also discuss 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

(over)

- Long-term effects that 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



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 and 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.

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 or call **800-813-HOPE (4673)**.

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National Office • 275 Seventh Avenue • New York, NY 10001

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