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After Testicular Cancer Treatment

Get information about how to live well after testicular cancer treatment and make decisions about next steps.

Living as a Cancer Survivor

For many people, cancer treatment often raises questions about next steps as a survivor.

- [Living as a Testicular Cancer Survivor](#)
- [Fertility and Hormone Concerns in Boys and Men With Testicular Cancer](#)

Cancer Concerns After Treatment

Treatment may remove or destroy the cancer, but it's very common to have questions about cancer coming back or treatment no longer working.

- [Second Cancers After Testicular Cancer](#)

Living as a Testicular Cancer Survivor

- [Follow-up care](#)
- [Can I lower my risk of the testicular cancer progressing or coming back?](#)
- [Could I get a second cancer after treatment?](#)
- [Getting emotional support](#)

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#)³ for you. This plan might include:

- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests
- A schedule for other tests you might need in the future, such as early detection (screening) tests for other types of cancer, or tests to look for long-term health effects from your cancer or its treatment
- A list of possible late- or long-term side effects from your treatment, including what to watch for and when you should contact your doctor
- Diet and physical activity suggestions
- Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health care

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep health insurance. Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and even though no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

At some point after your cancer treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who doesn't know about your medical history. It's important to keep copies of your medical records to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment. Learn more in [Keeping Copies of Important Medical Records](#)⁴.

Can I lower my risk of the testicular cancer progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) testicular cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the cancer growing or coming back, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements. Unfortunately, it's not yet clear if there are things you can do that will help.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as [not smoking](#)⁵, [eating well](#)⁶, [getting regular physical activity](#)⁷, and [staying at a healthy weight](#)⁸ might help, but no one knows for sure. However, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your health that can extend beyond your risk of testicular cancer or other cancers.

About dietary supplements

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)⁹ (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of testicular cancer progressing or coming back. This doesn't mean that no supplements will help, but it's important to know that none have been proven to do so.

Dietary supplements are not regulated like medicines in the United States – they do not have to be proven effective (or even safe) before being sold, although there are limits on what they're allowed to claim they can do. If you're thinking about taking any type of nutritional supplement, talk to your health care team. They can help you decide which ones you can use safely while avoiding those that might be harmful.

If the cancer comes back

If the cancer does recur at some point, your treatment options will depend on where the cancer is located, what treatments you've had before, and your health. For more information on how recurrent cancer is treated, see [Treatment Options for Testicular Cancer, by Type and Stage](#)¹⁰.

For more general information on recurrence, you may also want to see [Understanding Recurrence](#)¹¹.

Could I get a second cancer after treatment?

Men who've had testicular cancer can still get other cancers. In fact, testicular cancer survivors are at higher risk for getting some other types of cancer. Learn more in [Second Cancers After Testicular Cancer](#).

Getting emotional support

Some amount of feeling depressed, anxious, or worried is normal when cancer is a part of your life. Some people are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from help and support from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others. Learn more in [Life After Cancer](#)¹².

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests/imaging-tests/imaging-radiology-tests-for-cancer.html

Second Cancers After Testicular Cancer

second cancers.

Common second cancers after testicular cancer

Survivors of testicular cancer can get any second cancer, but they have an increased risk of:

- A second testicular cancer (this is different than the first cancer coming back)
- [Rectal cancer](#)¹
- [Pancreas cancer](#)²
- [Bladder cancer](#)³
- [Kidney cancer](#)⁴
- [Thyroid cancer](#)⁵
- [Acute myeloid leukemia \(AML\)](#)⁶

The most common cancer seen in testicular cancer survivors is a second testicular cancer.

Compared with most men in the general population, testicular cancer survivors are up to twice as likely to develop a new cancer outside the testicle. The chance of a second cancer changes over time and depends on which treatments were used and how old the patient was when he was treated.

If you had radiation therapy

Treatment with radiation is linked to some second cancers after testicular cancer. The risk is highest for cancers in organs in or near the area that was treated (the radiation field) -- the abdomen (belly) and pelvis, and include:

- [Bladder cancer](#)⁷
- [Colon cancer](#)⁸
- [Rectal cancer](#)⁹
- [Pancreas cancer](#)¹⁰
- [Stomach cancer](#)¹¹
- [Kidney cancer](#)¹²
- [Prostate cancer](#)¹³

If the radiation field includes the chest, there's an increased risk of:

- [Lung cancer](#)¹⁴
- [Esophagus cancer](#)¹⁵
- [Mesothelioma](#)¹⁶ (cancer of the outer lining of the lung)
- [Thyroid cancer](#)¹⁷

Radiation treatments also increase the risk of [melanoma skin cancer](#)¹⁸ and [connective tissue cancer \(sarcoma\)](#)¹⁹.

The risks of these cancers starts going up within 5 years and doubles after 10 years in those men who were treated with radiation alone. This risk remains high and doesn't seem to go down with time. This is why long-term follow-up is so important. The risks are generally greater with higher radiation doses or if the patient got both chemotherapy and radiation.

In recent years, radiation therapy for testicular cancer has changed. Lower doses of radiation are used, and preventive radiation treatment to the chest has been stopped. Long-term follow-up studies are needed to see if these changes have lowered second cancer risks.

If you had chemotherapy

Chemotherapy is also linked to an increased risk of second cancers, but it's slightly less than what's seen after radiation. Treatment with chemo has been linked to increased risk for these cancers:

- Kidney
- Thyroid
- Soft tissue

There's also an increased risk of [leukemia](#)²⁰ and [myelodysplastic syndrome \(MDS\)](#)²¹ after chemotherapy for testicular cancer. Use of the chemo drug cisplatin is linked most often to leukemia and MDS, though high doses of etoposide (VP-16, Etopophos, or Vepesid) are sometimes also a factor. (The doses were higher in the past than those normally used today.) Radiation given with chemotherapy seems to increase risk even more. Leukemia and MDS are both uncommon cancers normally, so even though the risk of these cancers is higher than average, very few patients develop them from their treatment.

Follow-up after treatment

After completing treatment for testicular cancer, you should still see your doctor regularly. You may have tests for a number of years to look for signs the cancer has come back or spread. Experts don't recommend any other testing to look for second cancers in people without symptoms. But let your doctor know about any new symptoms or problems, because they could be caused by the cancer coming back or by a new disease or second cancer.

Survivors can do regular testicular self-exams to look for cancer in the remaining testicle.

All patients should follow the [American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer](#)²², such as those for colorectal cancer.

The Children's Oncology Group has guidelines for the follow-up of patients treated for cancer as a child, teen, or young adult, including screening for second cancers. These can be found at www.survivorshipguidelines.org²³.

All survivors of testicular cancer should not use tobacco and [avoid tobacco smoke](#)²⁴. Smoking increases the risk of many cancers.

To [help maintain good health](#)²⁵, survivors should also:

- Get to and stay at a healthy weight
- Keep physically active and limit the time you spend sitting or lying down
- Follow a healthy eating pattern that includes plenty of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains, and limits or avoids red and processed meats, sugary drinks, and highly processed foods
- Not drink [alcohol](#)²⁶. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men

These steps may help lower the risk of some other health problems, too.

See [Second Cancers in Adults](#)²⁷ for more information about causes of second cancers.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer.html

2. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/pancreatic-cancer.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/kidney-cancer.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/thyroid-cancer.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/acute-myeloid-leukemia.html
7. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer.html
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27. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html

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