



[cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

After Prostate Cancer Treatment

Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living as a Prostate Cancer Survivor](#)
 - [Second Cancers After Prostate Cancer](#)
-

Living as a Prostate Cancer Survivor

For most men with prostate cancer, treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. Completing treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but find it hard not to worry about cancer growing or coming back. This is very common if you've had cancer.

For other men, the [cancer may come back](#)¹ in other parts of the body or [may never go away completely](#)². These men may get [hormone treatment](#)³ or other [therapies](#)⁴ to help keep the cancer in check for as long as possible. Learning to live with cancer that does not go away can be difficult and very stressful.

Life after prostate cancer means returning to some familiar things and also making some new choices.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#)⁵ 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](#)⁶, 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](#)⁷ suggestions

Typical follow-up schedules after prostate cancer

Even if you have completed treatment, your doctors will still want to watch you closely. It's very important to go to all of your follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask questions about any problems you may have and may do exams and lab tests or [imaging tests](#)⁸ to look for signs of cancer or treatment side effects.

Some [treatment side effects](#)⁹ might last a long time or might not even show up until years after you have finished treatment. Your doctor visits are a good time to ask questions and talk about any changes, problems, or other concerns you have.

Doctor visits and tests

Your doctor visits will usually include [PSA blood tests, possibly with digital rectal exams \(DREs\)](#)¹⁰ if your prostate hasn't been removed. These will probably begin within a few months of finishing treatment. How often you need follow-up visits and tests might depend to some extent on the [stage](#)¹¹ of your cancer and the chance of it coming back. Most doctors recommend PSA tests about every 6 months or so for the first 5 years after treatment, and at least yearly after that. Bone scans or other imaging tests might also be done, depending on your medical situation.

Prostate cancer can recur even many years after treatment, which is why it's important to keep regular doctor visits and report any new symptoms (such as bone pain or problems with urination).

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep [health insurance](#)¹². Tests and doctor

visits cost a lot, and although 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](#)¹³ to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment.

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

If you have (or have had) prostate 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](#)¹⁴, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements. While there are some things you can do that might be helpful, more research is needed to know for sure.

Getting regular physical activity

Some research has suggested that men who [exercise](#)¹⁵ regularly after treatment might be less likely to die from their prostate cancer than those who don't. It's not clear exactly how much activity might be needed, but more seems to be better. More vigorous activity may also be more helpful than less vigorous activity. Further studies are needed to follow up on these findings.

Getting to and staying at a healthy weight

Several studies have found that men who are overweight or obese when diagnosed with prostate cancer tend to have a worse outlook. But it's not yet clear if [losing weight](#)¹⁶ can lower this risk. More research is needed to help clarify this.

Quitting smoking

Some research has suggested that men who smoke are more likely to have their prostate cancer recur and are more likely to die from their cancer than men who don't smoke. More research is needed to see if [quitting smoking](#)¹⁷ can help lower these risks, although quitting is already known to have a number of other health benefits.

Nutrition and dietary supplements

Some studies have suggested that [eating a healthy diet](#)¹⁸ that is rich in vegetables and lower in animal fats might be helpful, but more research is needed to be sure. However,

we do know that a healthy diet can have positive effects on your overall health, with benefits that extend beyond your risk of prostate or other cancers.

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)¹⁹ have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of prostate cancer progressing or coming back. In fact, some research has suggested that some supplements, such as selenium, might even be harmful. 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 are 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 could be harmful.

If the cancer comes back

If your prostate cancer comes back at some point, your treatment options will depend on where it's thought to be and what types of treatment you've already had. For more information, see [Treating Prostate Cancer that Doesn't Go Away or Comes Back After Treatment](#)²⁰. We also have more on understanding and dealing with [cancer recurrence](#)²¹.

Could I get a second cancer after prostate cancer treatment?

Men who've had prostate cancer can still get other cancers. In fact, prostate cancer survivors are at higher risk for getting some other types of cancer. See [Second Cancers After Prostate Cancer](#)²² to learn more.

Moving on after prostate cancer

Emotional support

[Feelings](#)²³ of depression, anxiety, or worry are normal when prostate cancer is a part of your life. Some men are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from [help and support](#)²⁴ from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others.

Sexuality and feeling good about your body

Prostate cancer treatment can often affect sexual function. Learning to be comfortable with your body during and after prostate cancer treatment is a personal journey, one that is different for everyone. Information and support can help you cope with these changes over time. Learn more in [Sexuality for the Man With Cancer](#)²⁵.

References

See all references for Prostate Cancer

<https://www.cancer.org/content/cancer/en/cancer/prostate-cancer/references.html>

Last Medical Review: February 16, 2016 Last Revised: March 11, 2016

Second Cancers After Prostate Cancer

Cancer survivors can be affected by a number of health problems, but often a major concern is facing cancer again. If a cancer comes back after treatment it is called a [recurrence](#)¹. But some cancer survivors may develop a new, unrelated cancer later. This is called a [second cancer](#)².

Unfortunately, being treated for prostate cancer doesn't mean you can't get another cancer. Men who have had prostate cancer can still get the same types of cancers that other men get. In fact, they might be at higher risk for certain types of cancer.

Men who have had prostate cancer can get any type of second cancer, but they have an increased risk of certain cancers, including:

- [Small intestine cancer](#)³
- [Soft tissue cancer](#)⁴
- [Bladder cancer](#)⁵
- [Thyroid cancer](#)⁶
- [Thymus cancer](#)⁷
- [Melanoma of the skin](#)⁸

Men who are treated with [radiation therapy](#)⁹ also have a higher risk of:

- [Rectal cancer](#)¹⁰
- [Acute myeloid leukemia \(AML\)](#)¹¹

This risk is probably related to the dose of radiation. Newer methods of giving radiation therapy may have different effects on the risks of a second cancer. Because these methods are newer, the long-term effects have not been studied as well.

Follow-up after prostate cancer treatment

After completing treatment for prostate cancer, you should still see your doctors regularly. Let them 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.

Prostate cancer survivors should also follow the [American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer](#)¹², such as those for colorectal and lung cancer. Most experts don't recommend any other testing to look for second cancers unless you have symptoms.

Can I lower my risk of getting a second cancer?

There are steps you can take to lower your risk and [stay as healthy](#)¹³ as possible. For example, prostate cancer survivors should do their best to stay away from all [tobacco products](#)¹⁴ and [tobacco smoke](#)¹⁵. Smoking can increase the risk of bladder cancer after prostate radiation, as well as increase the risk of many other cancers.

To help maintain good health, prostate cancer survivors should also:

- Get to and stay at a [healthy weight](#)¹⁶
- Stay [physically active](#)¹⁷
- Eat a [healthy diet](#)¹⁸, with an emphasis on plant foods
- [Limit alcohol](#)¹⁹ to no more than 2 drinks per day

These steps may also lower the risk of some other health problems.

See [Second Cancers in Adults](#)²⁰ to learn a lot more about the causes of second cancers.

References

See all references for Prostate Cancer

<https://www.cancer.org/content/cancer/en/cancer/prostate-cancer/references.html>

Last Medical Review: February 16, 2016 Last Revised: March 11, 2016

Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team

<https://www.cancer.org/content/cancer/en/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html>

Our team is made up of doctors and master's-prepared nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our Content Usage Policy

<https://www.cancer.org/content/cancer/en/about-us/policies/content-usage.html>.

cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345