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## After Bladder Cancer Treatment

Get information about life as a cancer survivor, next steps, and what you can do to help.

### Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living as a Bladder Cancer Survivor](#)

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## Living as a Bladder Cancer Survivor

For some people with bladder cancer, treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. The end of treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but you might find it hard not to worry about cancer coming back. This is very common if you've had cancer.

For some people, bladder cancer might never go away completely, or it might come back, either in the bladder or in another part of the body. Some people might need regular treatments to try to keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that doesn't go away can be difficult and very stressful.

- [Follow-up care](#)
- [Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan](#)
- [Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records](#)

- [Can I lower my risk of the bladder cancer progressing or coming back?](#)
- [If the cancer comes back](#)
- [Could I get a second cancer after bladder cancer treatment?](#)
- [Moving on after bladder cancer](#)

## Follow-up care

Even if you have completed treatment, your doctors will still want to watch you closely. People who've had bladder cancer are at risk for the cancer coming back, as well as developing a second bladder cancer, so it's very important to go to all your follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask questions about any problems you're having. They may do [exams, lab tests, and imaging tests](#)<sup>1</sup> to look for signs of cancer and/or treatment side effects.

Some treatment [side effects](#)<sup>2</sup> might last a long time. Some might not even show up until years after you've finished treatment. Your doctor visits are a good time to ask questions and to talk about any changes or problems you notice or concerns you have.

## Doctor visits and tests

Your schedule of exams and tests will depend mainly on the cancer's [stage](#)<sup>3</sup> (as well as the risk group, for non-muscle invasive bladder cancer), what treatments you've had, and other factors. Be sure to follow your doctor's advice about follow-up tests.

Most experts recommend exams and tests about every 3 to 6 months for people who have no signs of cancer after treatment. These are done to see if the cancer is growing back or if there's a new cancer in the bladder or urinary system. Your follow-up plan might include physical exams, urine or blood tests, and imaging tests (like MRI or CT scans). These doctor visits and tests can be done less often as time goes by if no new cancers are found.

**If your bladder hasn't been removed**, regular [cystoscopy](#)<sup>4</sup> exams will also be done, typically about every 3 months for the first couple of years.

**If you had a cystectomy** and now have some type of [urinary diversion](#)<sup>5</sup> (a new pathway to allow urine to leave the body), you will be checked for signs of infection and changes in the health of your kidneys. Urine tests, blood tests, and x-rays might be used to do this. Your vitamin B12 levels will be checked at least once a year because urinary diversions made with your intestine can affect how your body absorbs B12. Your doctor will also talk to you about how well you're able to control your urine. Tests will be

done to look for signs of cancer in other parts of your urinary tract, too.

Some doctors recommend other lab tests as well, such as the urine tumor marker (biomarker) tests discussed in \_\_\_\_\_

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.

While there are some things you can do that might be helpful, more research is needed to know for sure.

### **Not smoking**

[Smoking is a strong risk factor for bladder cancer](#)<sup>11</sup>. Some research has found that people who smoke are more likely to have their bladder cancer recur (come back) and are more likely to die from their cancer than people who don't smoke.

More research is needed to see if stopping smoking can help lower these risks, although quitting is known to have many other health benefits. If you want to quit smoking and need help, call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345. You can also learn more in [How to Quit Using Tobacco](#)<sup>12</sup>.

### **Getting to and staying at a healthy weight**

Some studies have shown that having excess body weight (a [BMI of 25 or more](#)<sup>13</sup>) might be linked to a higher chance of [non-muscle invasive bladder cancer](#)<sup>14</sup> growing or coming back.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as [eating well](#)<sup>15</sup>, [getting regular physical activity](#)<sup>16</sup>, and [staying at a healthy weight](#)<sup>17</sup> might help lower your risk, but more research is needed to be sure. Still, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your health that can extend beyond your risk of bladder cancer or other cancers.

### **About dietary supplements**

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)<sup>18</sup> (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of bladder 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 don't have to be proven effective or even safe before being sold. However, 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 bladder cancer is treated, see [Treatment of Bladder Cancer, Based on the Stage and Other Factors](#)<sup>19</sup>.

For more general information on recurrence, you may also want to see [Understanding Recurrence](#)<sup>20</sup>.

## Could I get a second cancer after bladder cancer treatment?

People who've had bladder cancer can still get other cancers (known as **second cancers**). In fact, bladder cancer survivors are at higher risk for getting some types of cancer, including:

- A second bladder cancer. This is different from the first cancer coming back. Cancer of the ureter (the tube connecting the kidney to the bladder) or renal pelvis



## Sexuality and feeling good about your body

Bladder cancer treatment can often affect your sex life. (See [Bladder Cancer Surgery](#)<sup>37</sup> for more on this.) Learning to be comfortable with your body during and after bladder cancer treatment is a personal journey, one that's different for everyone. Information and support can help you cope with these changes over time. Learn more in [Fertility and Sexual Side Effects in People with Cancer](#)<sup>38</sup>.

## Hyperlinks

1. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html)
2. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects.html)
3. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/staging.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/staging.html)
4. [www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests/endoscopy/cystoscopy.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests/endoscopy/cystoscopy.html)
5. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/treating/surgery.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/treating/surgery.html)
6. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/detection-diagnosis-staging/how-diagnosed.html)
7. [www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/survivorship-care-plans.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/survivorship-care-plans.html)
8. [www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html)
9. [www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/understanding-health-insurance.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/understanding-health-insurance.html)
10. [www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/keeping-copies-of-important-medical-records.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/keeping-copies-of-important-medical-records.html)
11. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/causes-risks-prevention/risk-factors.html)
12. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco/guide-quitting-smoking.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco/guide-quitting-smoking.html)
13. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/body-weight-and-cancer-risk/body-mass-index-bmi-calculator.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/body-weight-and-cancer-risk/body-mass-index-bmi-calculator.html)
14. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/about/what-is-bladder-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/about/what-is-bladder-cancer.html)
15. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/eat-healthy.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/eat-healthy.html)
16. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/get-active.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/get-active.html)
17. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/take-control-your-](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/take-control-your-)

- [weight.html](#)
18. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html)
  19. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/treating/by-stage.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/treating/by-stage.html)
  20. [www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html)
  21. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/pancreatic-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/pancreatic-cancer.html)
  22. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/laryngeal-and-hypopharyngeal-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/laryngeal-and-hypopharyngeal-cancer.html)
  23. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/esophagus-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/esophagus-cancer.html)
  24. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/lung-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/lung-cancer.html)
  25. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/vaginal-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/vaginal-cancer.html)
  26. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/prostate-cancer.html)
  27. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/kidney-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/kidney-cancer.html)
  28. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/colon-rectal-cancer.html)
  29. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/skin-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/skin-cancer.html)
  30. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/acute-myeloid-leukemia.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/acute-myeloid-leukemia.html)
  31. [www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html)
  32. [www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html)
  33. [www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html)
  34. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/surgery/ostomies/urostomy.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/surgery/ostomies/urostomy.html)
  35. [www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services.html](http://www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services.html)
  36. [www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html)
  37. [www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/treating/surgery.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer/treating/surgery.html)
  38. [www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/fertility-and-sexual-side-effects.html](http://www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/fertility-and-sexual-side-effects.html)

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