

Others become very anxious about their health and uncertain about coping with everyday life. This is very common if you've had cancer. Feelings of fear and anxiety may still occur as time passes, but these emotions should not be a constant part of your daily life. If they are, be sure to talk with a member of your health care team.

For others, the cancer might never go away completely. Some may get regular treatment with chemotherapy or other treatments to try and help keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that doesn't go away can be difficult and very stressful.

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Follow-up care

When treatment ends, 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 are having and may do pelvic exams and Pap tests, as well as [colposcopy](#)¹ and [lab tests](#)² to look for signs of cancer or treatment [side effects](#)³. Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some may last for a few weeks to months, but others can last the rest of your life. Other side effects called late effects may not develop until months or even years after treatment has ended. This is the time for you to talk to your cancer care team about any changes or problems you notice and any questions or concerns you have.

Treatment can leave vaginal tissue fragile and prone to injury. Follow-up will require checking these tissues for injury or tightening and scarring. Some women will be advised to use vaginal dilators, which a woman inserts in her vagina to gently stretch her vaginal tissue, gradually making it more elastic over time. You can learn more in [Treating Sexual Problems for Women With Cancer](#)⁴.

It is also important to talk with your doctor about who will lead your follow-up care. Some survivors continue to see their oncologist, while others transition back to the care of their primary care doctor or another health care professional. This decision depends on several factors, including the type and stage of cancer, treatments received, side

effects, health insurance rules, and your personal preferences.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Your [survivorship care plan](#)⁵ 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](#)⁶.

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

If you have (or have had) vaginal 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](#)⁷, [eating well](#)⁸, [getting regular physical activity](#)⁹, and [staying at a healthy weight](#)¹⁰ 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 vaginal cancer or other cancers.

About dietary supplements

So far, no [dietary supplements](#)¹¹ (including

doi:10.3322/caac.21591. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21591> on August 13, 2024.

Society of Gynecologic Oncology. What happens after treatment? Accessed at www.sgo.org/patients-caregivers-survivors/patients/vaginal-cancer-what-happens-after-treatment/ on August 13, 2024.

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Can I Get Another Cancer After Having Vaginal Cancer?

Cancer survivors can be affected by a number of health problems, but often their greatest concern is facing cancer again. If a cancer comes back after treatment it's called a [recurrence](#)¹. But some cancer survivors may develop a new, unrelated cancer later. This is called a [second cancer](#)². No matter what type of cancer you have had, it's still possible to get another (new) cancer, even after surviving the first.

- [Follow-up after treatment](#)

Being treated for cancer doesn't mean you can't get another cancer. In fact, certain types of cancer and cancer treatments can be linked to a higher risk of certain second cancers.

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

- [Vulvar cancer](#)³
- [Esophagus cancer](#)⁴
- Cancer of the ureter (the tube that connects the kidney to the bladder)

They may have an increased risk of [lung cancer](#)⁵. The risk of [bladder cancer](#)⁶ is also increased in women who were treated with radiation.

These cancers are all linked to [smoking](#)⁷, which is also a risk factor for vaginal cancer. And both vaginal and vulvar cancer are linked to infection with [human papillomavirus](#)

(HPV)⁸.

Follow-up after treatment

After completing treatment for vaginal cancer patients will see their doctors regularly to look for signs of their cancer coming back, as well as signs of a new vaginal cancer. Experts do not recommend extra testing to look for second cancers in people without symptoms. 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 of vaginal cancer should follow the [American Cancer Society guidelines for the early detection of cancer](#)⁹ and stay away from tobacco products. Smoking increases the risk of many cancers, including the second cancers most often seen in those treated for vaginal cancer.

To [help maintain good health](#)¹⁰, 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. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 per day for men

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

See [Second Cancers in Adults](#)¹¹ for more on the causes of second cancers.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence/what-is-cancer-recurrence.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults/what-are-second-cancers.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/vulvar-cancer.html

4. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/esophagus-cancer.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/lung-cancer.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/bladder-cancer.html
7. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html
8. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/hpv.html
9. www.cancer.org/cancer/screening/american-cancer-society-guidelines-for-the-early-detection-of-cancer.html
10. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity.html
11. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html

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Rock CL, Thomson C, Gansler T, et al. American Cancer Society guideline for diet and physical activity for cancer prevention. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. 2020;70(4). doi:10.3322/caac.21591. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21591> on August 13, 2024.

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