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## After Thyroid Cancer Treatment

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

### [Living as a Thyroid Cancer Survivor](#)

For many people, cancer treatment often raises questions about next steps as a survivor. Learn about how to live well after thyroid cancer treatment and how to make decisions about next steps.

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## Living as a Thyroid Cancer Survivor

For many people, treatment removes or destroys the cancer. If you've finished treatment, you might be relieved. Completing treatment for thyroid cancer can be both stressful and exciting. But you might also find it hard not to worry about your cancer growing or coming back. This is very common concern.

For other people, thyroid cancer might not go away completely, or it might come back in another part of the body. In this case, you might need regular treatments to help keep the cancer under control for as long as possible. Learning to live with cancer that doesn't go away can be difficult and very stressful.

No matter what your situation is, there are steps you can take to live well, both physically and emotionally.

- [Follow-up care](#)
- [Can I lower the risk of my thyroid cancer progressing or coming back?](#)

- [Second cancers after treatment](#)
- [Getting emotional support](#)

## **Follow-up care**

Whether or not you've completed treatment, your cancer care team will want to watch you closely. It's very important to go to all follow-up appointments. During these visits, they will examine you and ask about your symptoms. They might also order blood tests or imaging tests such as radioiodine scans or ultrasounds.

This follow-up care is needed to check for cancer recurrence or spread, as well as possible side effects of certain treatments. This is the time for you to ask your cancer care team any questions and to discuss any concerns you might have.

## **Managing side effects**

Almost any cancer treatment can have [side effects](#)

For papillary or follicular cancer, your follow-up will depend largely on the type of treatment you had. Along with regular physical exams, you'll likely need other tests as well.

- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests
- A list of possible late- or long-term side effects from your treatment, including what to watch for and when you should contact your health care team
- A schedule for other tests you might need, 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
- Diet and physical activity suggestions that might improve your health, including possibly lowering your chances of the cancer coming back
- Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health

### **Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records**

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep health insurance. Tests and doctor

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Adrenal cancer risk is especially high in people who have had medullary thyroid cancer.

People who have been treated with radioactive iodine also have an increased risk of [acute lymphocytic leukemia \(ALL\)](#)<sup>16</sup>, [stomach cancer](#)<sup>17</sup>, and [salivary gland cancer](#)<sup>18</sup>.

### **Can I lower my risk of getting a second cancer?**

There are steps you can take to lower your risk of getting another cancer and stay as healthy as possible. For example, smoking is linked to an increased risk of several cancers, so if you smoke, stopping might help lower that risk.

To help [maintain good health](#)<sup>19</sup> after thyroid cancer:

- 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 that limits or avoids red and processed meats, sugary drinks, and highly processed foods.
- Avoid or limit alcohol. If you do drink, have no more than 1 drink per day for women or 2 drinks per day for men.

These steps might also lower your risk of many other health problems.

Survivors of thyroid cancer should also follow the [American Cancer Society Guidelines for the Early Detection of Cancer](#)<sup>20</sup>, including for breast, cervical, colorectal, lung, and prostate cancer.

### **Getting emotional support**

Some amount of feeling depressed, anxious, or worried is normal when thyroid cancer is a part of your life. Some people are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from help and support, whether that's from friends and family, religious groups, support groups, professional counselors, or others.

**Learn more:** [Life After Cancer](#)<sup>21</sup>

## **Hyperlinks**



National Comprehensive Cancer Network. NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: Thyroid Carcinoma. V.2.2024. Accessed at [https://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician\\_gls/pdf/thyroid.pdf](https://www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/thyroid.pdf) on April 27, 2024.

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