

Colorectal Cancer Survivorship Care Guidelines

What Are the American Cancer Society Survivorship Care Guidelines?

The American Cancer Society Cancer Survivorship Care Guidelines are advice to help doctors, nurses, and other health care professionals provide care for cancer survivors who have finished cancer treatment. The cancer survivorship care guidelines summarized here address issues that can occur in colon and rectal cancer survivors after treatment. The American Cancer Society Colorectal Cancer Survivorship Care Guidelines were developed to help primary care clinicians give you care that is right for you.

Why Are Colorectal Cancer Survivorship Care Guidelines Needed?

- Each year, about 132,700 people in the United States are diagnosed with colorectal cancer. Many of these patients will receive treatment and survive for many years.
- Starting at diagnosis and until the end of treatment, patients with colorectal cancer receive most of their health care from specialists, such as a surgeon, medical or radiation oncologist, etc. Once treatment is finished, most of the medical care for these patients will be given by their primary care clinician.
- Colorectal cancer occurs mostly in older men and women. Many of these patients have other health issues that are treated by primary care clinicians.
- There are potential side effects and complications that can persist and may even occur after treatment is complete. These problems can be caused by the cancer or by the treatments. Here are some examples:
 - Diarrhea, bowel control issues, or other bowel or rectal problems
 - Memory issues or difficulty concentrating
 - Loss of taste or dry mouth
 - Distress, depression, and anxiety
 - Lingering fatigue
 - Numbness or discomfort in the hands and feet
 - Ostomy issues
 - Difficulty getting an erection, vaginal dryness, or pain during intercourse
 - Bladder control issues

What Is Included in These Guidelines?

The guidelines address issues related to the follow-up care of patients who have been treated for colorectal cancer. The guidelines provide advice on:

- Ways to help your specialists and your primary care clinician work together to meet your health care needs
- How to help you get well or stay well through physical activity, a healthy diet, and quitting tobacco if you use it
- How to watch for the return of your colorectal cancer and the use of screening tests to look for other types of cancer
- Symptoms to watch for that could be side effects of colorectal cancer and its treatment or late complications

How Should I Use These Guidelines?

The guidelines give you important information that you should discuss with your doctor. You should talk to your doctor about the following:

- Did my specialist (surgeon, medical, or radiation oncologist, etc) give a written survivor care plan to my primary care clinician that described my treatment, possible side effects, and important follow-up care?
- How often will I need check-ups? What tests will I need to check for side effects, complications, the cancer returning, or new cancers?
- Is there anything I can do to help my physical or mental side effects after cancer treatment? If so, when should I start taking these steps?

As you complete your treatment, think about the care you will receive as you move forward. You will want your primary care clinician to know about your colorectal cancer and how it was treated. You will also want them to know what to watch for and how often to see you. And most important, you will want your primary care clinician to work with you so that you are getting the care that is right for you. ■

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