



Cancer survivorship information for survivors and carers



Follow-up of survivors of endometrial cancer

This fact sheet is for women who have completed treatment for endometrial cancer. It explains why follow-up appointments with your health care team are important. It also explains things you and your local doctor (GP) can do to help manage and reduce possible effects after treatment.

Key messages

- When endometrial cancer is found and treated early, the outcome is often very good.
- Every woman who has been treated for endometrial cancer should attend follow-up appointments with a doctor.
- Endometrial cancer survivors experience physical, emotional, and social effects from endometrial cancer and its treatment.
- Late effects may occur months or years after treatment and are dependent on the type of cancer treatment.
- GPs play a key role in the ongoing follow-up of survivors of endometrial cancer.
- Obesity is a risk factor for endometrial cancer. After cancer treatment, obesity can worsen the side effects and can cause illness.

Potential issues

As a survivor of endometrial cancer, you may have physical, emotional, and social concerns after completing treatment. Attending follow-up appointments and seeking care and support from your health care team should help address all of these issues.

Follow-up frequency

Your health care team will advise on who will coordinate your follow-up and how often you need to have appointments based on your particular needs.

Your follow-up appointments are important in assisting you with:

- Looking for signs of cancer spread, recurrence or secondary primary cancers
- Treating any side effects or late effects from your cancer and treatment
- Advice about preventing new cancers and reducing your risk of cancer returning

Coordinating follow-up

It is important that your follow-up is properly coordinated so that you attend the right number of appointments at the right time.

Your health care team will decide on who will coordinate your follow-up.

Refer to your survivorship care plan (SCP) for more information about your follow-up care. If you don't have a SCP, ask your



specialist or cancer nurse who should be able to provide this to you. You can also create your own SCP using a template on the Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre website:

www.petermac.org/services/support-services/australian-cancer-survivorship-centre/survivors-and-carers/resources



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Example follow-up schedule for women treated for endometrial cancer:

Type of follow up	Years 1–2	Years 3–5	After 5 years
History (talking about your health), physical and gynaecological examination which includes pelvic examination.	Every 3–6 months	Every 6–12 months	Every 12 months
Cervical screening tests	Not routinely recommended for women treated for endometrial cancer		

Source: Adapted from Cancer Australia. (2017). Follow-up care for women with low-risk endometrial cancer.

Available: <https://canceraustralia.gov.au/publications-and-resources/cancer-australia-publications/follow-care-women-low-risk-endometrial-cancer-guide-general-practitioners>

Note: This schedule may vary, for example, if your doctor prefers a different timeframe based on your particular needs or suspects a recurrence, or if you have another illness.

When to contact your doctor

Contact your doctor if you notice any symptom that concerns you. You don't have to wait for your follow-up appointment.

Contact your doctor if you notice:

- vaginal bleeding
- unexplained persistent pain or discomfort
- unexplained persistent changes in your general condition such as loss of weight or loss of appetite
- any symptom that concerns you.

Possible long-term or late effects of treatment

Long-term and late effects are changes that are linked to your treatment. Long-term effects are changes that happen during or soon after treatment finishes. Late effects are those that can happen years after treatment finishes. All of the common cancer treatments (surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy) can cause both long-term and late effects.

Not all women will experience late or long-term effects. Some are more common than others. Some are rare.

They will vary depending on your diagnosis and the type of treatment you had.

There are things that can be done to help control or treat many long-term and late effects; they are included in the following table.

Possible long-term or late effects of treatment

Long-term and late effects common for all treatments	Cause	Things you can do to reduce and manage effect
Cancer-related fatigue (persistent tiredness that doesn't get better with rest or sleep)	May be caused by treatment, pain, anxiety, disturbed sleep, medications and other illnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular exercise and eating a balanced diet can help reduce fatigue. Speak with your GP about starting an exercise program. • Your GP may change the dose of your medications or refer you to a specialist if needed.
Changes to your physical function	Surgery, radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to your GP about these changes. • Your GP may refer you to see a specialist.
Pain	May be caused by surgery, radiotherapy or chemotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak with your GP about any pain you experience and ways it can be managed.
Distress, anxiety, depression, fear of cancer coming back (recurrence)	It is common for women to have fears about cancer coming back or worry about the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to your family, friends or partner about how you feel. • Although these feelings usually improve over time, you may want to see a counsellor or join a support group. • You can call the Cancer Council on 13 11 20 to speak to someone who is also a survivor of cancer. • Refer to the ACSC <i>Fear: Coping with the fear of your cancer coming back</i> fact sheet www.petermac.org/sites/default/files/ACSC_FactSheet_Fear%20of%20Cancer%20Coming%20Back_WEB_170721.pdf
Lymphoedema (visible swelling in the limb)	May occur if you have had lymph nodes removed surgically or treated with radiotherapy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skin care and gentle exercise can help. • Your GP may suggest you wear a compression stocking or have lymphatic drainage massage. • Be alert for any changes and symptoms and report these to your GP. • Refer to the Cancer Council <i>Understanding Lymphoedema</i> fact sheet www.cancer.org.au/content/about_cancer/factsheets/Understanding_lymphoedema_fact_sheet_June_2017.pdf



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Long-term and late effects common for all treatments	Cause	Things you can do to reduce and manage effect
Changes to cognitive function (difficulty concentrating, focusing and remembering things)	May be caused by fatigue, emotions, radiotherapy and chemotherapy treatment or medications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making notes and reminders can help to keep track of tasks and appointments. • Speak about these problems with your partner, family or friends and ask for their help. • If this concerns you, speak to your GP about ways to help manage these changes. • For more information, refer to the Cancer Council <i>Understanding changes in thinking and memory</i> fact sheet www.cancer.org.au/content/about_cancer/treatment/CAN6580%20Understanding%20Changes%20in%20Thinking%20and%20Memory%202018.pdf
Loss of fertility	If you are not already menopausal, surgery and radiotherapy will stop you from being able to have children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If speaking to your partner, friends and family does not provide the support you need, speak with a counsellor or a gynaecological nurse about your feelings.
Menopause	Many women are post-menopausal at diagnosis. For some women, treatment will cause sudden menopause and may result in more severe symptoms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintaining a healthy weight and eating a healthy diet can help reduce symptoms. • Using oestrogen cream can help with vaginal dryness. • If your symptoms are severe, speak to your GP about possible treatment and other ways to manage them.
More specific to Radiotherapy treatment	Cause	Things you can do to reduce and manage effect
Changes to your sexual function and intimacy	Radiotherapy can cause vaginal dryness, soreness, vaginal bleeding and pain during sex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelvic floor exercises, using a vaginal applicator and oestrogen cream can help with vaginal changes and improve sexual function. • Speak to your GP about a referral to a specialist. • You can make a free call to speak to a Cancer Council nurse about sexual intimacy on 13 11 20.
Bladder problems (incontinence, leakage, pain urinating and urgency)	Radiotherapy and surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pelvic floor exercises can help prevent leakage. • Using pads can help you stay dry. • Speak to your GP about seeing a specialist and other ways to manage these problems.
Bowel problems (constipation, urgency, leakage, diarrhoea and farting)	Radiotherapy or surgery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eating a balanced diet, drinking more water and exercising can help. • Speak to your GP or a dietitian about making changes to your diet or medications to help reduce bowel problems.
Changes to your bone health (increased risk of fractures and osteoporosis)	Radiotherapy and some chemotherapy drugs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weight-bearing exercise such as yoga or Tai Chi can help improve your bone health. • Stopping smoking can cut the risk of bone fracture and osteoporosis by half. • Your GP may suggest you have regular bone scans and taking calcium and vitamin D supplements.
More specific to chemotherapy treatment	Cause	Things you can do to reduce and manage effect
Peripheral neuropathy (tingling or numbness in the hands and feet)	Chemotherapy treatment or drugs	Regular exercise such as walking, quitting smoking and limiting your alcohol intake can help. Speak to your GP about seeing a specialist.

Getting the right help and support

It is important that you find the right support to help you manage and cope with any issues you may have after treatment.

Your cancer experience may lead to changes for you and the people close to you. For example, changes to relationships, roles and lifestyle.

There may be concerns about the cancer coming back and worry about the future.

It can help a lot to talk to the people close to you about your feelings and worries. You, your family and friends can seek support by calling Cancer Council on 13 11 20.

Survivors who go through cancer treatment without partners or close family and friends may experience great loneliness.

Getting in touch with other women who have had a similar experience can be helpful. You can contact fellow survivors through support groups and/or a service such as Cancer Connect via Cancer Council (13 11 20) or Counter Part (1300 781 500).



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Staying well

Having cancer and treatment often makes people think about their health in different ways. Some women decide they want to live a healthier lifestyle than they did before getting cancer.

It is important to understand the link between endometrial cancer and obesity. For some women, being overweight or obese can increase their chance of cancer coming back and can cause health issues after treatment.

It's a great time to make some changes and commit to being at a healthy weight for height and staying well. Some women look for ways to reduce the chance of their cancer coming back and preventing a new cancer developing. Things you can do include:

- Achieving and maintaining a healthy weight
Tip: Plan a time in the day when you can make a healthy meal and do some exercise
- Stopping smoking
Tip: Your GP can support you with your plan to quit smoking or you can call the Quitline on 13 78 48 for advice and support.
- Having a healthy diet
Tip: Eat two serves of fruit and 5 serves of vegetables a day
- Increasing physical activity
Tip: At least 30 minutes of moderate activity daily

These simple tips go a long way towards improving your health. They may also reduce many of the physical and emotional effects of cancer treatment.

Your GP can support you to make healthy lifestyle choices and changes to help you stay well.

Screening

It's important to have screening for other cancers.

- If you are over 50 years, talk to your doctor about screening for bowel cancer.
- A regular mammogram is recommended every two years for all women aged between 50–74 years of age.

In addition:

- Have your usual cholesterol, blood pressure and blood glucose checks
- Have regular dental examinations
- Take care to protect your skin from the sun.

ACSC fact sheets

Emotional impact of cancer and its treatment fact sheet

www.petermac.org/sites/default/files/ACSC_FactSheet_emotional%20impact%20of%20cancer_WEB.pdf

Fatigue: dealing with cancer-related fatigue fact sheet

www.petermac.org/sites/default/files/ACSC_FactSheet_Fatigue%20WEB.pdf

How your GP can support you to live well fact sheet

www.petermac.org/sites/default/files/ACSC_FactSheet_GeneralPractice_Support.pdf

Fear: Coping with the fear of your cancer coming back fact sheet

www.petermac.org/sites/default/files/ACSC_FactSheet_Fear%20of%20Cancer%20Coming%20Back_WEB_170721.pdf

Acknowledgment

Thank you to the health professionals and survivors who reviewed this document.

Further information

The Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre (ACSC) – A Richard Pratt Legacy

The ACSC – A Richard Pratt Legacy is a web-based centre. The ACSC aims to help improve services and care for cancer survivors in Australia as well as focusing on increased awareness, especially about issues that affect survivors after their treatment ends. www.petermac.org/cancersurvivorship

Cancer Council

Contact the Cancer Council Support Line on 13 11 20 for information about side effects from treatment, or any other questions you have about cancer and surviving cancer. www.cancer.org.au

Counterpart

Counterpart is a service of Women's Health Victoria. It connects, supports and informs women with breast or gynaecological cancer to live well. Phone 1300 781 500 www.counterpart.org.au

ACSC Survivorship Care Plan Template

You can create your own SCP by filling in information about your cancer and treatment. www.petermac.org/services/support-services/australian-cancer-survivorship-centre/survivors-and-carers/resources

Cancer Council Understanding Lymphoedema fact sheet

www.cancer.org.au/content/about-cancer/factsheets/Understanding_lymphoedema_fact_sheet_June_2017.pdf

