



Cancer survivorship information for survivors and carers

Improving care and support for cancer survivors

Who is a survivor?

We recognise a cancer survivor as someone diagnosed with cancer. This includes people having treatment, getting better after treatment, or having ongoing treatment.

Not everyone will relate to the term 'survivor'. You may prefer a different term. Some people talk about life after cancer, others use the term 'living with and beyond cancer'.

Key messages

- People are 'cancer survivors' from the time of diagnosis and throughout their life.
- In the past, cancer care focused on diagnosis and treatment. There has been a **shift to supporting survivors and their families in the time after treatment**. This is often called the survivorship phase.
- The ACSC connects survivors to services and support after initial treatment.
- We also connect and educate doctors, nurses and other health workers.
- The ACSC has fact sheets on common issues after cancer treatment.

Why do we focus on cancer survivorship?

Cancer affects more than one million Australians. More people survive cancer today than 30 years ago. This is because of earlier diagnosis and better treatments.

In the past, cancer care was mainly about diagnosis, treatment, looking for signs of cancer coming back ('recurrence') and side effects. Now, people know more about the common issues cancer survivors may face after initial treatment.

We also know that cancer touches a person's whole life. It can deeply affect carers, family and

friends. It is important that survivors get the right information and support at the right time.

However, some survivors may find a whole new outlook on life and may wish to pursue different interests. Everyone is different. Each person adjusts to a cancer diagnosis and treatment in their own way.

Our aim is to support survivors and their family, friends and carers in the period after initial treatment.

About us

- The Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre (ACSC) began in 2009.
- We are based at Peter Mac.
- We work with health professionals, community organisations and health services.
- We aim to improve care and support for cancer survivors.
- We connect survivors to information and support. We do not provide medical services.
- Our resources for survivors and their families are at www.petermac.org/cancersurvivorship.
- As shown below we also provide education and training for health professionals and leadership and guidance on cancer survivorship.

The work of the ACSC





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What issues do survivors commonly experience?

- physical side effects (e.g. pain, fatigue)
- emotional impact of cancer (e.g. worry about cancer coming back)
- practical issues (e.g. financial worry)
- impact on relationships

The ACSC can connect survivors and their family, friends and carers to information and support.

Speak to your specialist, cancer nurse and/or GP about any issues that are affecting your day-to-day life.

How can we support you?

Our resources are for survivors and their families, carers and friends.

They cover:

- general cancer information
- follow-up care
- common issues after initial treatment
- healthy living

“During my journey I have needed help with different problems I have encountered. The ACSC website has been a great resource”

– Survivor

ACSC website

Our website has many resources including:

- fact sheets, videos and podcasts
- information in different languages (e.g. fact sheets)
- real-life survivor stories
- survivorship care plan templates*
- links to community organisations and support groups.

Face to face education

We provide education and support opportunities at our Peter Mac, Parkville campus. This includes:

- The Cancer Wellness Program run by ACSC in partnership with Cancer Council Victoria.
- The Peter Mac Wellbeing Centre, a space where patients and carers can relax, attend an activity, event or wellbeing education session.

mycareplan.org.au

Use this tool with your doctor or other health worker to create a survivorship care plan*. The tool is for people with early-stage breast, prostate or bowel cancer.

Common survivorship issues directory

The directory (www.petermac.org/survdirect) has resources on common survivorship issues including:

- anxiety and depression
- cancer-related fatigue
- fear of cancer coming back or getting worse

*A survivorship care plan is a record of your cancer and cancer treatment. It explains what to expect, follow-up and strategies on how to remain well.

Acknowledgement

Thank you to the consumers who reviewed this resource.



Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre

Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre

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www.petermac.org/cancersurvivorship

More information

We encourage you to seek support from your specialist, cancer nurse and/or GP if you have any issues that affect your day-to-day life.

You may find the following websites useful.

- The Australian Cancer Survivorship Centre

Website includes a range of fact sheets, videos and information on life after cancer.

www.petermac.org/cancersurvivorship

- Cancer Council 13 11 20

This national support line can answer any questions you have about cancer and surviving cancer.

www.cancer.org.au