

About you: Care after cancer

Survivorship newsletter

Summer 2024



Ascension



Inside this issue

Ask the professional: Survivorship Care Plans Page 2

Survivorship story: *Featuring Megan.S, breast cancer survivor* Page 4

Cancer prevention and wellness: Alcohol's link to cancer Page 6

Using Nature as Medicine: Mind, Body, and Soil Page 8

Time to eat: Healthy Eating Away From Home Page 9

Within the community Page 10

Ask The Professional

What Is A Cancer Survivorship Care Plan?



Katherine Davis

DNP, AGPCNP-C, APC

Katie Davis DNP, AGPCNP-C, APC is a nurse practitioner with Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin. She is board-certified in adult gerontology primary care and provides cancer risk reduction and survivorship care to patients at high risk of developing cancer or who have had cancer in the past. Katie has a special interest in health promotion and preventative care. She strives to deliver patient-centered care and empower patients to improve their health.

A survivorship care plan is compiled by a member of your treatment team and includes important information about your cancer diagnosis, treatment, and any ongoing care that may be needed in the future. After active treatment for cancer there may no longer be a need to continue to follow up with your cancer treatment team and your care may instead be managed by a primary care provider. Having all of this important information in one place can help with the transition of care.

What information is included in a survivorship care plan?

There is not one survivorship care plan that can be used for all patients as the diagnosis of cancer and its treatment is complex and will vary from person to person. Below is a list of a few general areas that may be included in a survivorship care plan:

- List of all treatment providers: Treatment is often provided in a team approach and may include a medical oncologist, surgeon, and radiation oncologist. If more information about your treatment is needed this list helps to know who to contact.
- Type of cancer and stage, which may include any additional information specific to your cancer diagnosis
- Treatment summary: This should include any treatments received, such as radiation or chemotherapy, and the dates started and completed
- Late and long-term side effects: The cancer survivorship care plan should also note if the treatment(s) received caused any side effects, while in treatment. These side effects may be long-term which are side effects that last months to years after treatment. There also may be potential late side effects which are side effects that do not occur until after the end of treatment and should be monitored for.
- Family history of cancer and genetic testing: If you have a family history of cancer it is important to share that with your provider to evaluate if genetic testing may be indicated. If you received any genetic counseling and/or genetic testing, this should be listed in your survivorship care plan.

- Cancer surveillance or other tests needed in the future: There may be more frequent or additional screening tests recommended. This will depend on the type of cancer, your age, treatment you received, and if you are on any hormonal treatment.
- Lifestyle modifications: There are many steps you can take to decrease your risk of cancer recurrence or developing a new type of cancer. This includes following a healthy diet, staying active, avoiding or limiting alcohol, and smoking cessation if you smoke.

What if I didn't receive a survivorship care plan?

Many times a survivorship visit will be completed at the end of treatment which may be done by a nurse, advanced practice provider, or physician. Commonly individuals will receive their survivorship care plan within six months of completing treatment. If you did not receive one then talk to a member of your treatment team. Keep a copy of the survivorship care plan for your records and bring it to your future doctor visits.



***Have a question?
The cancer prevention,
wellness and survivorship team
invites you to submit your
questions by scanning the QR
code.***

Survivorship Story

Megan S., Breast Cancer Survivor

The following story is in the patient's own words.

It was May 2015, and I felt like my life was just beginning. I had secured my dream job in corporate retail. I was in a new relationship. I was meeting new people and creating a wonderful social circle. I moved into an apartment, and was out on my own for the very first time. I could see my future blooming into everything I wanted right before my eyes, and was feeling on cloud nine. Then, one day, I felt a lump in my breast. I had just turned 26 and although I didn't have family history, I decided to get it checked out. After a mammogram, ultrasound, and a biopsy, I received the call. I'll never forget the day, sitting in my dining room with my mom and boyfriend, listening to the nurse navigator tell me I've tested positive for breast cancer.



My life quickly became a series of doctors appointments, bloodwork, and scans. Within a few weeks from my diagnosis, I was rolled into an operating room to have a bilateral mastectomy. Soon after, I learned I had an advanced stage of breast cancer. With an aggressive cancer, came an aggressive treatment plan with a series of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. Everything was changing rapidly and I felt as if I had lost total control of my life. **The one thing I could control was keeping a positive perspective. This was just a chapter in my life that would soon come to an end, I was sure of it.**

One year after my diagnosis, I was in remission and ready for my next chapter. I wanted a fresh start, so I moved my life from Milwaukee to Chicago. New city, new job, new friends and living with my boyfriend of three years for the first time, I was feeling back on cloud nine. But with the move came a new team of doctors who had a new perspective on my diagnosis. My new doctors advised I do an additional year of chemotherapy. I was devastated. I wasn't prepared for my trauma to follow me to Chicago, and it was only a matter of time before it would come crashing down.

Every aspect of my life had changed when I moved to Chicago. It changed fast and I quickly learned it would have a serious impact on my well-being. I was lost, unbalanced, unwell, and in a deep state of depression causing me to be irritable to the people I loved most. I was not a happy person, nor was I happy to be around. It wasn't until I hit my rock bottom, and almost lost the one I love dearly, that I decided it was time to focus solely on my well being and to find my 'new normal'. What was it going to take for me to feel balanced and well again? I wasn't sure, but I was committed to finding out.

I moved into my own space, a lovely one-bedroom, loft style apartment, in a trendy neighborhood outside of downtown Chicago. The first step on my solo journey into wellness was to find a therapist. I was three years out from my cancer diagnosis and had yet to accept or grieve what I had gone through. Therapy allowed me to do just that in a place where I felt safe, and within a few months I was already feeling lighter, happier, and more grateful. As I continued with therapy, I started to explore how I wanted to live my new life after cancer.

It wasn't easy living alone. I would often find myself bored and not knowing how to fill my time, so I tried new hobbies: cooking, reading, arts & crafts, cycling, and fostering dogs. I was learning more and more about myself everyday. What I liked and what I didn't like. On a quest for how to connect with myself on a deeper level, I started journaling, practicing meditation and yoga, getting out in nature, and traveling. All which have had a profound positive impact on my well being. I learned the importance of intertwining these practices into my daily life, as they help to keep me balanced. As I continued on my wellness journey, I was doing a lot of soul searching and trying to find the silver lining in my story.

After being diagnosed with breast cancer at such a young age, I often found myself questioning my purpose in life. As I was climbing the corporate ladder for over a decade, I found a passion for leading, coaching and mentoring my colleagues. This organically spilled over into my personal life and I soon realized I enjoyed helping my family and friends get to where they wanted to be in their careers or personal life. Feeling called to mentor in a bigger way, I found an organization where I became a one-on-one mentor for cancer fighters and survivors. Providing them comfort, connection, and empathy in their darkest moments by listening, supporting and sharing my experience. This was it! This is the silver lining in my story and I've now made it my purpose.

Transitioning out of treatments and back into the world was extremely difficult. It's not only something I struggled with, but countless others struggle with too. In 2022, I became an Integrative Wellness Life Coach on a mission to help women impacted by breast cancer find their new normal as they transition out of treatments and back into the world. I'm helping them on their wellness journey to discovering their 'new normal'. **As for where I'm currently at in my wellness journey? It's continuous and I'll always be working to move my life towards balance. The work never stops and I'll continue to grow and evolve overtime. I've learned that what works for me now, may not work for me in the future, and that's beautiful. Beautiful that I have so much more to unpack and discover in my own lifetime, all while helping others to discover theirs too.**

-Megan Stier

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Submit your cancer story to be included in our newsletter



Cancer Prevention and Wellness

Alcohol's Link To Cancer



Riann Collar

PA-C

Riann Collar, PA-C, is a physician assistant with Ascension Medical Group Wisconsin. Riann provides cancer risk reduction and survivorship care for patients at high-risk of developing cancer or who have had cancer in the past. Riann has a special interest in wellness and disease prevention. She uses active listening to better understand each patient and deliver patient-centered care, empowering patients to improve their health.

If you did not know this, you are not alone. It is estimated that only 30% of Americans are aware that alcohol causes cancer. A carcinogen is a cancer causing substance, and alcohol is a known carcinogen. On the International Agency for Research on Cancer Group 1 carcinogen list, alcohol appears right alongside asbestos, tobacco, UV radiation and other cancer causing substances.

Alcohol is linked to causing approximately 6% of all cancer cases diagnosed in the United States. Evidence has shown a correlation of alcohol to at least 7 types of cancers: several types of head and neck cancers, esophagus cancer, liver cancer, breast cancer, and colorectal cancer. There is preliminary evidence that alcohol is linked to causing even more types of cancers and there may be more to come on this in the future. Alcohol consumption may even increase the risk of developing a second type of cancer or having a cancer recurrence which is especially important for cancer survivors.

A common misconception is that certain types of alcohol cause cancer more than other types, which is NOT true.

All types of alcohol cause cancer. Wine, beer, and liquor are equally the same when it comes to cancer risk. It is also important to be aware that there are not any health benefits to drinking alcohol; it is all health harms and risks.



Scan QR code to visit
our *Cancer Prevention
& Wellness* site

Alcohol causes cancer in several ways:

- When digested in the body, alcohol is converted to acetaldehyde which is a known chemical that damages our DNA and protein in our cells
- Alcohol causes free radicals which also damage our cells
- Alcohol decreases the ability to break down and use nutrients that are helpful to decreasing cancer risk
- Alcohol increases the amount of estrogen in the body which increases breast cancer risk
- Alcohol consumption can lead to extra calories consumed and excess weight, and being overweight or obese increases the risk for cancer

It is also important to mention that when a person smokes and consumes alcohol, cancer risk is even greater. Drinking alcohol during cancer treatment can also lead to increased risk of complications including increased chemotherapy toxicity, increased radiation side effects, and longer recovery from surgery.

There is no safe amount of alcohol when it comes to our health.

The American Cancer Society states that it is best not to drink alcohol. If someone chooses to drink alcohol, this should be limited to occasionally and limited to no more than 2 standard drinks per day for men and no more than 1 standard drink per day for women.

What You Can do to Decrease Your Risk:

- If you don't drink alcohol, don't start!
- If you do drink:
 - Avoid "excessive drinking" which is defined as 15+ drinks per week (or 5+ drinks in 2-3 hours) for a man and 8+ drinks per week (or 4+ drinks in 2-3 hours) for a woman.
 - Consume alcohol only occasionally and follow the alcohol limits provided by the American Cancer Society
 - Discuss alcohol consumption with your healthcare provider so that alcohol reduction or stopping drinking is done safely

References:

American Cancer Society. Alcohol Use and cancer.

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/alcohol-use-and-cancer.html#:~:text=According%20to%20the%20American%20Cancer,dri nk%20a%20day%20for%20women.>

National Cancer Institute. Alcohol and Cancer.

[https://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/brp/hbrb/alcohol-and-cancer#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%205.5,to%20alcohol%20consumption%20\(2\).](https://cancercontrol.cancer.gov/brp/hbrb/alcohol-and-cancer#:~:text=It%20is%20estimated%20that%205.5,to%20alcohol%20consumption%20(2).)

Wisconsin Cancer Collaborative. Alcohol and Cancer. <https://wicancer.org/programs/alcohol-and-cancer>

Using Nature as Medicine: Mind, Body and Soil

By: Kara Vander Vliet RN, BSN, OCN

It's that time of year where the weather is starting to warm up and become more pleasant. Many of us look forward to spending time in nature, especially after a long winter. "Nature" has a very broad definition. It can mean green areas like a park or the plants and flowers in your yard. It can be the trees and scenery you pass while driving, a houseplant, or even watching nature documentaries while indoors. Spending time in nature can have multiple benefits for any individual, but especially for cancer patients and survivors.



- Possible benefits of spending time in nature include:
- Decreased levels of stress, anxiety and depression
- Improved sleep, cognition and memory
- Increased mood and general feelings of well being
- Improved immune system
- Improved pain control

Spending time in nature does not need to include long hikes, walks, or vigorous activity. There are many different ways that you can intentionally interact with nature, even on a smaller scale.

- Indoor nature activities include looking out of a window, intentionally looking at a houseplant or flower arrangement, or watching a nature documentary.
- Take a chair onto your front porch, deck or into your yard.
- If possible, take a walk outside. Even a small walk up and down your driveway or around the outside of your house will have positive benefits.
- Ask a friend or a loved one to take you for a drive. Park in a beautiful spot and open the windows. Smell the leaves, feel the breeze on your face, see the vibrant colors.
- Taking the time to interact with nature, even in small amounts, can have large, lasting effects for all individuals.



References:

Nature as Medicine: mind body and soil by David Victorson PhD et al. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* volume 26, number 8, 2020, pp 658-662

Time To Eat

Healthy Eating Away From Home

By: Wendy Balister RD, CD

Consuming a healthy diet during cancer treatment and throughout cancer survivorship is very important to feeling your best. By choosing foods and drinks that are nutrient rich you nourish and heal your body. Smart choices can be achieved at home and away from home also.

Tips to help you eat healthy when dining away from home

1. Think ahead and plan where you will eat. Consider what meal options are available. Look for places with a wide range of menu items.
2. Take time when reviewing the menu. Some restaurant menus may have a special section for “healthier” choices.
3. Compare nutrition information. Menu terms that may indicate an item is healthier include; baked, broiled, grilled, roasted, poached and steamed.
4. Menu terms that usually mean a food is higher in fat and calories include fried, buttered, creamed and crispy. Choose these foods less often.
5. Begin with salad as a way to include more vegetables at mealtime. Follow up with a light main course.
6. Another option is to choose a salad with a plant based protein source such as chickpeas black beans or tofu as your main course.
7. It is okay to make special requests, just keep those simple. For example, ask for a baked potato or a cooked vegetable in place of french fries.
8. Refrigerate carry-out or leftovers if the food won't be eaten right away. Throw away foods kept at room temperature for more than two hours.
9. Enjoy a variety of healthful foods from different cultures. Focus on dishes that emphasize vegetables, lean meat, fish or beans.
10. Look for a sandwich wrap in a soft tortilla. Fillings such as grilled chicken and vegetables can be healthier options.
11. Try a smoothie made with 100% juice, fruit and yogurt as a light meal.
12. Grabbing dinner at the supermarket deli? Consider rotisserie chicken, fresh baked whole grain bread or rolls and fresh fruit.
13. If you routinely eat smaller amounts throughout the day, split your order. Share a large meal with a friend or take half home for another meal.
14. Avoid choosing beverages containing alcohol. For cancer prevention, it is best not to drink.
15. Often eating on the go? Tuck portable non-perishable foods in your tote or backpack. Some suggestions include peanut butter and whole grain crackers, fresh fruit, whole grain granola bar or trail mix.

Reference: U. S. Department of Health and Human Services U. S. Department of Agriculture. (2019). Home: Dietary guidelines for Americans. Home | Dietary Guidelines for Americans. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/>

Within The Community

Support Groups and Programs

Racine

- **Multiple Myeloma Support Group (Hybrid)**
Meets the second Monday of each month from 6:30-8 p.m. in the Cancer Center Conference Room at Ascension All Saints Hospital. *For more information, contact Sarah Jurkiewicz sewi@IMFsupport.org*
- **Prostate Cancer Support Group (In person)**
Meets the fourth Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7 p.m. in the Cancer Center Conference Room at Ascension All Saints Hospital. No Meeting in July or December. *For more information, contact Annette Matera 262-687-8597 or annette.matera@ascension.org*
- **Fit To Fight (In person)**
A exercise program for patients currently undergoing cancer treatment, or cancer survivors who have recently completed treatments in our Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Care Centers. Classes are twice weekly. Patients receiving care through the Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Center may qualify for a scholarship: Includes a 3 month membership for the cancer patient and 1 support person. *For more information or to register: please call 262-687-4377*

Milwaukee

- **Live Well For Caregivers (In person)**
Meets the fourth Wednesday of each month from 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in the garden level of the Radiation Oncology Department at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital. *For more information, contact Beth Garbe 414-585-1548 or elizabeth.garbe@ascension.org*

Fox Valley

- **The Cancer Support Group**
Patients and any support individuals able to attend this support group at Ascension St. Elizabeth in the Helen Fowler Board Room. This support group meets the first Monday of each month from 6-7 p.m. No Meeting in July or December. *For more information, contact Heather.Roesch@ascension.org or carrie.olm@ascension.org*
- **A Time To Heal - Survivorship 101**
A free 9-week program, at Ascension NE Wisconsin-St. Elizabeth Campus, designed to help cancer survivors, of any cancer diagnosis, regain their physical, emotional, and spiritual health after cancer treatment. These weekly sessions provide evidence based advice on topics including nutrition, exercise, building resilience, and moving forward in the face of fear. *For more information, contact kayla.thorne@ascension.org*



Within The Community

Support Groups and Programs

Wauwatosa/Elmbrook/Franklin

- **Journey to Wellness (In person)**
Meets the first Wednesday of each month from 10-11 a.m. at the Chapel of Reiman Cancer Center. *For more information, contact biannca.kramer@ascension.org*
- **Coping with Cancer Support Group (In person)**
Meets the third Tuesday of each month from 12:00-1 p.m. in the first floor lobby conference room. *For more information, contact Amanda Hanson 262-780-4255 or amanda.hanson1@ascension.org*
- **Prostate Support Group (In person)**
Meets the fourth Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7 p.m. in the fifth floor Conference Room 5B. No Meeting in July or December. *For more information, contact Leanne Walz leanne.walz@ascension.org*
- **Ostomy Support Group**
Meets the first Thursday of each month from 10:00-11 a.m in the fifth floor conference room A/B. For those who have a colostomy, ileostomy, urostomy or are anticipating ostomy surgery. Please RSVP by Monday the week of the meeting to Ashley Szmanda. For more information, contact Ashley Szmanda 414-447-2146 or ashley.szmanda@ascension.org.



- **Yoga Connection - SE Mayfair Road**
A free 8-week program designed to help cancer survivors, of any type, and if desired a support person. Meets Mondays at 5:30 p.m and Fridays at 3 p.m in the 5th floor conference room. Registration is required. *For more information, scan the QR code below or contact Leanne Walz at 414-256-1955 or Amanda Hanson at 262-780-4255*



Scan the QR code to learn more about yoga connection and to register!

Within The Community

Head and Neck Cancer Educational Series

A free comprehensive educational series for individuals with head and neck cancers. This five week educational series will be taught by experienced clinical staff and adapted to address the needs specific to cancer survivors with head and neck cancers.

Topics that will be covered include:

- Speech, dental and oral care
- Nutrition, swallowing and feeding tube challenges - Cooking Demonstration included
- Lymphedema and exercise
- Smoking implications and cessation tips
- Late and long term side effects

Each class will take place every Tuesday from 4:30-5:30 p.m. at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's Hospital - Milwaukee Campus, Cancer Center Conference Room.

This series will start September 10, 2024 and go through October 8, 2024.

***Please note that registration is required due to limited class sizes and that this series will be recorded for other cancer survivors to watch.**



Scan the QR code to learn more and register!

Questions?
Contact Kayla Thorne
kayla.thorne@ascension.org



Cancer Awareness

June

National Cancer Survivor Day - June 2nd

According to the latest figures from 2022, there are 18 million people living with a history of cancer in the United States. The phrase cancer survivor can mean different things to different people. It is often used as a general term describing someone who has had a diagnosis of cancer. This means that cancer survivorship starts at the time of diagnosis.

Research shows that making lifestyle changes during and after cancer treatment can help prevent a recurrence or a second cancer. These lifestyle changes include healthy eating, regular physical activity, coping with difficult emotions after treatment, stop using tobacco, protect your skin from the sun, and attending your follow up care visits.

World Kidney Cancer Day - June 20th

Every person has 2 kidneys, which are located above the waist on both sides of the spine. These reddish-brown, bean-shaped organs are each about the size of a small fist. They are located closer to the back of the body than to the front. The kidneys filter blood to remove excess minerals and salts and extra water. The kidneys also produce hormones that help control blood pressure, red blood cell production, and other bodily functions. Kidney cancer begins when healthy cells in 1 or both kidneys change and grow out of control, forming a mass called a tumor.

July

Sarcoma and Bone Cancer

Sarcomas are cancers that develop from bones or soft tissues, such as fat, muscles, nerves, and more. Because bone and soft tissues can be found nearly everywhere in the body, a sarcoma can start in any part of the body.

60% begin in an arm or leg

30% start in the torso or abdomen

10% occur in the head or neck

Glioblastoma Awareness Day - July 13th

Glioblastoma multiforme (GBM) is the most common of malignant primary brain tumors in adults and is one of a group of tumors referred to as gliomas.

August

Appendix Cancer

Primary appendix cancer is very uncommon, affecting about 1 to 2 people out of every 1 million people. It is more common among people between 50 and 55 years of age.

World Lung Cancer Day

Tobacco smoke damages cells in the lungs, causing the cells to grow abnormally. The risk that smoking will lead to cancer is higher for people who smoke heavily and/or for a long time. Regular exposure to smoke from someone else's cigarettes, cigars, or pipes can increase a person's risk, even if that person does not smoke. This is called environmental or "secondhand" tobacco smoke.

Reference: American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO). 2005-2024. Cancer Awareness Dates. <https://www.cancer.net/research-and-advocacy/cancer-awareness-dates>



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