

# About you: Care after cancer

Survivorship newsletter

Winter 2024-2025



Ascension



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# Ask The Professional

## What should I know about esophageal cancer?



**Tara R. Semenkovich**  
MD, MPH

Tara R. Semenkovich, MD, MPH, is a board-certified, experienced thoracic surgeon with cardiothoracic surgery fellowship training who operates at Ascension Columbia St. Mary's in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She diagnoses and treats lung cancer, esophageal cancer, chest tumors, hiatal hernias and other disorders in the chest. Dr. Semenkovich uses the latest surgical techniques, including robotic-assisted surgery. Robotic-assisted surgery may lead to a faster recovery, shorter hospital stay, less scarring, and greater accuracy for complex procedures. Every appointment with Dr. Semenkovich starts with a conversation. Dr. Semenkovich takes the time to answer all your questions – big and small.

Dr. Semenkovich has extensive training and experience in robotics, complex thoracic oncology, and benign thoracic disease and foregut pathology. She has a passion for lung cancer screening and deep understanding of esophageal cancer, including an extensive clinical research background and publication of a multi-site study. She also has done substantial work focusing on improving the patient experience around the time of surgery. She has the expertise to deliver advanced surgical care using minimally invasive robotic-assisted surgery. With our multispecialty approach to care, Dr. Semenkovich works with a team of cancer specialists to deliver comprehensive, compassionate care.

About 16,000 people are diagnosed with esophageal cancer every year. About 1 in 200 people will be diagnosed with esophageal cancer over the course of their life. Some of the most common things that put you at risk for getting esophageal cancer include:

- Smoking and alcohol use, particularly when combined
- Reflux, especially if it causes changes in the lining of your esophagus called Barrett's esophagus
- Obesity

Often, this cancer is found when people have symptoms like trouble swallowing, the sensation that food gets stuck, vomiting, chest pain, or weight loss. These symptoms can be caused by a number of different diseases, but if you have them, you should talk to your doctor about getting evaluated because the earlier that cancer is found, the more likely it is to be treatable.

Usually a diagnosis involves getting a test called an upper endoscopy, which is done by a GI doctor where they pass a scope through the mouth while you are sedated to take a look at the lining of the esophagus and take biopsies. This test can also diagnose other medical problems that can cause similar symptoms.

### ***What happens if I am diagnosed with esophageal cancer?***

If you are diagnosed with esophageal cancer, the first step is to figure out what stage your cancer is. This often involves other tests like a CT or PET scan, and may include a specialized scope called an EUS. The stage of your cancer will help determine the best treatment.

Esophageal cancer is often considered in three different groups:

1. Early stage disease
2. Locally advanced disease
3. Metastatic disease

The treatment for these different stages is different, and is impacted by the location of your cancer and the type of your esophageal cancer.

In most cases, treatment will involve a team of several doctors from different specialties that can include medical oncology, radiation oncology, gastroenterology, and thoracic surgery. This team will help put together a personalized treatment plan for you to give you the best chance at cure.

For most people who present with symptoms of trouble swallowing, and don't have spread of the cancer beyond the region of the esophagus, treatment usually includes consideration of chemotherapy, radiation, and surgery. The period of treatment and recovery usually lasts several months.

### ***What should I know about the surgery for esophageal cancer?***

The surgery for esophageal cancer is called an esophagectomy. This is a surgery in which the majority of your esophagus and a portion of your stomach is removed to completely take out your cancer and the surrounding lymph nodes. The rest of the stomach is made into a tube to replace the esophagus, and reconnected to allow you to eat.

There will be changes in the way that you eat following this surgery, and your surgical team will discuss these with you so you know what to expect as you go through treatment. Your team is here to guide you through each step of your treatment, and support you through recovery.



***Have a question?  
We invite you to submit  
your questions by  
scanning the QR code.***

# Survivorship Story

## James B., Throat Cancer Survivor

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

In March of '24, at the age of 58, I was diagnosed with throat cancer. It was of the HPV variety and I had a mass in the base of my tongue and lymph node on the left side of my neck.



A few months prior to my diagnosis, I had been experiencing more intense allergy symptoms. I historically suffer from hay fever, asthma and GERD (acid reflux) and thought that it was unusual that I was suffering more than usual in the winter. Amy, my wife, encouraged me to get in to see my allergist just to see what was going on. My allergist looked me over and ended up putting me on a heavier prescription for my GERD, a steroid inhaler and scheduled an upper GI scope. I started feeling a little better soon after I started my prescriptions. The upper GI scope didn't show anything of concern. Soon after the scope I noticed a bump on the left side of my neck. It didn't hurt but I scheduled an appointment with my General Practitioner (GP). My GP checked me out and got me an appointment right away with an ENT. The ENT scoped my nose and said he thought things looked decent. He wasn't able to view the bump on the side of my neck with the camera from the scope so he ordered a CT scan. Upon viewing the CT scan, my ENT called me to say he thought we should get a biopsy of the bump on my neck. We got the results very soon after the biopsy. The ENT said that I had cancer and got me in contact with the radiation and medical oncology teams at St. Mary's/Columbia Ascension Water Tower - Van Dyke Cancer Center.

It certainly gave me pause and concern upon learning that I had cancer. That said, I didn't have to spend many anxious days/nights before meeting with the oncology teams since I was able to meet with them very shortly after getting the news (thankfully). Amy and I met with the radiation and medical oncology teams and they quickly, efficiently and gracefully laid out a plan of action. We very much appreciated their direct and no bullsh\*t approach. They showed us compassion but got straight to business. They expressed that they felt that my HPV cancer was treatable, curable and that we had at least an 80% chance of success. By the end of the afternoon both teams presented us with a detailed plan of action, timeline and gave us the unvarnished truth as to what we would/could expect with the treatments. At the end of the long day we felt that the teams did a great job answering our questions and concerns. Amy and I both agreed that we didn't need to get a second opinion. We were ready to get things started.

The teams wanted to start treatment as soon as possible and asked us to get on the schedule in early April. We informed them that we already had a long weekend vacation booked in Savannah. They felt that we should take that weekend to relax and get away to spend some quality time together. That really meant a lot to us. We started treatment the second week of April. The treatment consisted of 7 weeks of radiation (5 sessions per week) and three rounds of chemotherapy (one session every three weeks). I have to say that the treatments weren't too bad. I was lucky that my office is only 15 minutes from the Van Dyke Clinic (VDC) and the radiation treatments only took about 15-20 minutes. The chemotherapy was about a 3-4 hour process with fluids on the front and back end of the actual chemo infusion. The first 4-5 weeks of treatment came and went without much incident. My mouth began to get a little dry and I noticed that I had to make some adjustments to my gym workouts. By week 5 I stopped going to the gym and made sure to get out a walk around my neighborhood regularly. By week 6 I definitely started to notice that I was losing some steam and had to get regular rest. I started working from home and needed to take an early afternoon nap. Thankfully, I didn't experience any nausea but I did start to have some blood pressure lows and get some fluids at the VDC. I also was losing a lot of my taste, was pushing 3 Ensures daily and eating lots of soups, stews and soft food. Frankly, I was starting to lose my appetite and desire to eat. My dietician at the VDC really helped with this. We got a number of recipes and suggestions that were very helpful and appreciated. She was consistently available to us and checked in reliably throughout my treatment. I also met with a speech pathologist regularly at the VDC that was very attentive, readily available and helpful. Fortunately, I didn't lose the ability to eat, swallow and speak throughout my treatment.

Even though treatment was technically 7 weeks, the teams informed me that the following 3-4 weeks after treatment would be very challenging. They were right on the money. Weeks 7-11 were tough. My throat and tongue hurt more, I had no appetite, had to have more regular fluids for hydration and I was more fatigued. I was getting light headed on a more regular basis and did fall down a few times, especially when I stood up too quickly. I stopped working and just tried my best to get as much nutrition as I could. Getting enough calories was a constant challenge. I ended up losing 25 lbs by week 11. Eating so many soups and stews, not being able to eat my favorite foods and having to significantly deviate from my regular eating habits was probably the toughest part of the treatment. It just was difficult to eat/want to eat. It was frustrating and I didn't handle it as gracefully as I would have wanted (that's an understatement). After my 7 week treatment and the following 6 weeks, my radiation oncologist gave me a nose and throat scope and indicated that she no longer was able to see my cancerous growth. She said that she was very happy with my overall blood work, various lab results and appearance. My medical oncologist was also happy with my progress. Things looked promising. Fast forward to a few months later.... I had a pet scan. I got great news with a clear scan and my DNA blood test for HPV was negative. I was cancer free. I was very lucky and fortunate. Things could have ended up so differently. I realize there is a long, long list of people that weren't as lucky as me. Cancer is relentless, unpredictable and cruel.

I have so many people to thank and will be forever indebted to the many that contributed to my good fortune and successful treatment. First and foremost, Amy (my wife). Amy couldn't have been more loving, supportive, attentive and thoughtful. I can't imagine not having her on my side during this journey. She was strong, understanding and a constant ambassador for my good health and healing. Her patience was legendary and I couldn't have a better partner. I love her dearly. To my sister, my mother, mother-in-law, other family members, friends and coworkers.... Thank you for being there for me. Your well wishes, time spent helping me and Amy, faithful support and respect for our privacy were a godsend. There are so many people at Ascension and the Van Dyke Center that deserve more thanks that I could ever give. Both oncology teams were so on point. They were transparent, readily available, kind, tough, supportive and positive. They truly cared for me and Amy's welfare and we couldn't have asked for a better treatment team. Thank you to the nurses and radiation technicians and front desk folks in the radiation oncology department.... to the nurses, technicians, lab folks and front desk team in the medical oncology department. You all made Amy and I feel welcomed, heard and well taken care of. We saw so many smiles and were given so many well wishes. We experienced so much good will from so many. Thank you.

If I was to offer any advice to those that go through my similar treatment..... Be good to yourself and cut yourself some slack. Try not to be too serious. Cancer is serious enough... Let your loved ones help you. I very much can appreciate privacy and not wanting to burden those around you. **BURDEN THEM.** Let them help. It's important to them and it will mean the world to you. You are so lucky to have loved ones around you to help with your journey. With my specific type of cancer, I found it helpful to gain some weight prior to treatment. I lost a fair amount of weight and was happy I had some extra weight to lose. It was certainly a good thing that I was in decent physical condition. I've worked out regularly for years and have had a pretty good diet. I believe this helped with my recovery. I highly recommend you stay ahead with keeping your neck and face well moisturized. Moisturize regularly and faithfully. I also would lay off "Dr Google." You can drive yourself crazy by going down various rabbit holes about your condition. You certainly want to educate yourself about your particular type of cancer but lean on your treatment teams. Use the experts that are there to help you. I can't emphasize this enough.... use the resources that are easily available to you. The Van Dyke Cancer center has a ton to offer. Good luck and good health to all.

**I'm a cancer survivor and will hopefully  
be able to be so much more....**



**Submit your  
cancer story to  
be included in  
our newsletter**

# Cancer Prevention and Wellness

## Smoking cessation: It's not too late to quit



**Jennifer A. Minessale**  
APNP

Jennifer A. Minessale, APNP, is a nurse practitioner specializing in oncology at Ascension Wisconsin in Racine, WI. Ms. Minessale is board-certified in the care of adult patients as an Advanced Oncology Certified nurse practitioner (AOCNP). She completed the City of Hope's Cancer Genomics Intensive course. Ms. Minessale strives to empower patients and their families to become advocates in their own health care by educating the individual and family on their cancer risks, lifestyle factors that affect development of cancer, and genetic risk factors. She individualizes care for each patient based upon their particular cancer risk factors and goals.

If you are a smoker who has been diagnosed with cancer you may be wondering if there is a benefit to quitting at this point. You may be thinking that the damage is already done, how much worse will it be if you continue to smoke? Or you may be thinking that it is so stressful dealing with your cancer diagnosis that there is no way you can quit now. However, a recent study has shown that there is great benefit to quitting even after a cancer diagnosis.

Researchers reported in the October 31, 2024 issue of JAMA Oncology that smokers are 22% to 26% less likely to die if they quit after they are diagnosed with cancer. The most benefit comes to those that quit within six months of their cancer diagnosis and remain tobacco free for at least three months. The researchers followed 4500 smokers who were diagnosed with cancer and found an average survival of four years in those that quit, compared with two years for those who were unable to quit. Additionally, smokers who quit reported a greater quality of life. Other studies have shown that quitting smoking can increase the effectiveness of cancer treatment, and decrease potential side effects. It is believed that when you quit smoking it allows the immune system to fight cancer more effectively.

If you are ready to quit the first step is to seek help. It has been shown that those who receive counseling and/or medication are two times more likely to quit, than those who try to quit without any sort of aid. Discuss with your medical or radiation oncologist, surgeon, or primary care your desire to quit and their recommendations. They may refer you to someone who is specifically trained in tobacco treatment. The Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Prevention and Wellness team have providers who have been trained in tobacco treatment will provide personalized, compassionate, non-judgemental care to help you address and overcome your tobacco addiction. The providers are available to meet with you individually in-person or virtually through phone calls or video visits. Additionally, starting January Ascension will be offering a new quit smoking support group program. See more information on the next page! If you are interested in the individual smoking cessation sessions or the group program you may ask your doctor for a referral, or call 262-785-2273 to register.

# Smoking Cessation Support Program

*A free six week quit smoking support group*

Quitting smoking isn't easy, but it's easier with the right help and support. Ascension Wisconsin offers a free smoking cessation support group program to all adult Ascension patients. The program consists of 6 weekly, in-person, group support sessions. The support group meets every Thursday from 3- 4pm. for six weeks at Ascension All Saints Cancer Center conference room (3809 Spring St. Racine, WI 53405).

- Session 1: January 9th, 2025 - February 13th, 2025
- Session 2: September 4th, 2025 - October 9th, 2025

## Each session will include:

- A step-by step plan on how to quit
- Self-control techniques
- Relaxation and stress management methods
- Nicotine patches supplied free of charge
- Follow-up calls at 1, 3, and 12 month intervals
- Prescriptions and referrals, as appropriate
- Light refreshments during each group support session
- Each participant will meet with Jennifer Minessale, APNP, once prior to the start of the group sessions to discuss their individual needs and goals



#### References:

Cinciripini PM, Kyriotakis G, Blalock JA, et al. Survival Outcomes of an Early Intervention Smoking Cessation Treatment After a Cancer Diagnosis. *JAMA Oncol.* Published online October 31, 2024. doi:10.1001/jamaoncol.2024.4890

NIDA. 2020, January 1. What are treatments for tobacco dependence?. Retrieved from

<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/research-reports/tobacco-nicotine-e-cigarettes/what-are-treatments-tobacco-dependence> on 2024, November 10

# Cancer Survivorship Wellness

## Take a deep breath



**Deanna M. Birling**  
MSN, ANP-BC, AOCNP

Deanna M. Birling, APNP, is a nurse practitioner specializing in radiation oncology at Ascension Wisconsin in Racine and Milwaukee. Deanna is board-certified in the care of adult patients as an Advanced Oncology Certified nurse practitioner (AOCNP). She is trained as a Tobacco Treatment Specialist and completed the City of Hope's Cancer Genomics Intensive Course. Deanna has special interests in cancer survivorship, nutrition and lifestyle, sexual health and helping her patients live well after cancer treatments.

### Take A Deep Breath...

#### It's not just an expression, it really works!

As we gear up for a busy, joyous, and sometimes hectic holiday season we must remember to breathe. The never ending to do list of regular life let alone the holidays can leave us feeling anxious, stressed, and therefore not able to fully be present in the moment.

The science behind deep breathing involves the nervous system. Breathing is automatically controlled by the autonomic or involuntary nervous system in the brain. When we are anxious or stressed our bodies go into a "fight or flight" mode (sympathetic nervous system) which increases heart rate and blood pressure, this leads to shallow breaths and anxiety. The opposite of fight or flight is the "rest and digest" response (parasympathetic nervous system) which reduces heart rate and blood pressure, improves oxygen levels, allows the mind to calm down, muscles to relax, and may also reduce pain.

Taking time to intentionally breathe can provide many health benefits, both physical and emotional. Physical benefits include a slower heart rate and improved blood flow to all of the vital organs including the brain. This in turn can improve energy levels and physical functioning. Research also shows improved immune system function and digestion and a reduction in hot flashes for some. Emotional benefits include improved focus, decreased stress levels, improved sleep and a better mood. The best part about all of this is that the practice of deep breathing is always accessible to us and it's FREE! Research has shown that as little as a few minutes of deep breathing can have a profound effect on our wellbeing.

There are several different deep breathing techniques to try including diaphragmatic breathing, 4/7/8 breathing, and box breathing to name a few.



**Diaphragmatic breathing** is also known as belly breathing and involves the diaphragm muscle which sits at the bottom of the lungs and the top of the abdomen. Start with one hand on your upper chest and one hand on your belly. Breathe in through your nose while expanding your belly. The hand on your belly should move while the hand on your chest stays in place. As you exhale through your mouth pull your belly button in as if blowing out birthday candles. Repeat this sequence 3-5 times and take note of how you feel.

**4/7/8 breathing** is similar to diaphragmatic breathing but you breathe in for 4 seconds, hold the breath for 7 seconds and breathe out or exhale for 8 seconds. Repeat 3-5 times and see how you feel.

**Box breathing** is another method of breathing that gets its roots from the yoga practice called pranayama which means to focus on the breath. It is also referred to as square breathing and 4x4 breathing. In box breathing you inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds and hold again for 4 seconds to complete one cycle. Repeat this for a few minutes and see how you feel.

On rare occasions deep breathing can have the opposite effect on some people. If you feel more anxious after deep breathing for a few minutes you should look for alternative ways to relax.

There are other deep breathing techniques in addition to the ones described above. Hopefully, this inspired you to try one of the most effective ways to manage stress and anxiety while improving bodily functions and promoting an overall sense of calm in a sometimes chaotic world.

### Check out these Popular Apps to guide your breath work:

- **iBreathe - Apple iPod and iOS**
- **Breathe app - Apple Watch**
- **Breathwrk (iOS and Android)**
- **Calm (iOS and Android)**
- **Simple Habit (iOS and Android)**
- **Relax lite (iOS and Android)**
- **Paced Breathing (iOS and Android)**



# Yoga Connection

## The Positive Role of Yoga For Cancer Survivors

By: Kathy Davis



### Kathy Davis

Kathy Davis has been teaching yoga for over 17 years and has a background in specialized training such as Yoga4Cancer, Yoga for Osteoporosis, and alignment yoga. Kathy is the owner of Yoga Elements, a yoga studio in Appleton, Wisconsin. The studio provides a welcoming space for yoga practitioners of all levels. The studio schedule includes a variety of classes, from energetic vinyasa yoga classes to blissful restorative yoga classes. The studio has the only state of the art yoga wall in the area that allows for a deeper exploration of our yoga postures and offers any healing and therapeutic benefits.

Whether you have attended a class or not, you are most likely familiar with yoga as a physical practice made up of different poses that are performed on a mat in a group or one-on-one setting. As this practice works directly with the body, it can be designed to help specifically with some of the physical challenges that cancer can bring about. Yoga can improve strength and range of motion, it can help manage lymphedema, and it has been shown to reduce various types of pain.

But it is the physical aspect of the practice that is often why people are hesitant to try it. You may be feeling tired or overwhelmed and now we are asking you to exercise?? And after a cancer diagnosis and the demanding journey back to health, you may worry that you are not \_\_\_\_\_ enough for yoga. You can fill in that blank space with any number of words, - strong, flexible, mobile, etc.!

One of our participants, said, "A cancer diagnosis brings physical and emotional challenges. This yoga class specifically targets these challenges. The class has helped me regain strength and mobility and the mind-body connection has had a positive impact on my quality of life." This connection to the mind and our thoughts is so important. As an instructor that is trained in the Yoga for Cancer program, I think some of the most important benefits to be gained go beyond "what" we do in the class.

Cancer takes away so many things -

- Our confidence
- Our peace of mind
- Our mobility
- Our trust in our body's capabilities
- Our sense of independence

Yoga can help give you these things back. This class is designed to restore what is lost or diminished, both physically and mentally. The program provides a welcoming and safe space to share our experiences, our concerns, and our questions. The opportunity to share this class with other cancer survivors is empowering and encouraging. Gail, another of our participants, said, "As a woman, we so often care for others – our family and friends. Coming to yoga is something I can do for myself."

By moving through these carefully curated sequences, we can focus our practice on the specific side effects that cancer and the subsequent treatments can cause. We can bring back your confidence and optimism as you experience positive changes in your body and your sense of well-being. As Gail said, "We work on relieving physical aches and we can continue the yoga moves at home to achieve optimal mobility."

**Our goal is to give you the tools and more importantly, the support, to restore your ability to move with ease and trust in yourself again.**

# 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](mailto: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](mailto: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*



- **Yoga Connection - All Saints (In person)**  
Eight week yoga class that is designed for cancer survivors at any stage, and if desired, a support person. The yoga sessions include: gentle stretching, low impact and restorative poses, relaxation techniques and guided meditation and breathwork. Winter session will run January 7th - February 25th on Tuesdays at 1:30-2:30 p.m in the multipurpose cancer conference room. Registration is required. *For more information, scan the QR code below or contact Kayla Thorne at [kayla.thorne@ascension.org](mailto:kayla.thorne@ascension.org) or 414-212-5171.*



Scan the QR code to learn more about [yoga connection at All Saints](#) and to register!

# Within The Community

## Support Groups and Programs

### Fox Valley

- Yoga Connection - St. Elizabeth (In person)**  
 Eight week yoga class that is designed for cancer survivors at any stage, and if desired, a support person. The yoga sessions include: gentle stretching, low impact and restorative poses, relaxation techniques and guided meditation and breathwork. Winter session will run January 16th -March 6th on Thursdays at 12:00-1 p.m in the Fowlers Conference Room 2 Registration is required. *For more information, scan the QR code or contact Kayla Thorne at [kayla.thorne@ascension.org](mailto:kayla.thorne@ascension.org) or 414-212-5171.*



Scan the QR code to learn more about [yoga connection at St. Elizabeth](#) and to register!

- The Cancer Support Group (In person)**  
 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](mailto:Heather.Roesch@ascension.org) or [carrie.olm@ascension.org](mailto:carrie.olm@ascension.org)*



Scan the QR code to learn more about [yoga connection at SE Mayfair Road](#) and to register!

- 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto:leanne.walz@ascension.org)*
- Ostomy Support Group (In person)**  
 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](mailto:ashley.szmanda@ascension.org).
- Yoga Connection - SE Mayfair Road (In person)**  
 Eight week yoga class that is designed for cancer survivors at any stage, and if desired, a support person. The yoga sessions include: gentle stretching, low impact and restorative poses, relaxation techniques and guided meditation and breathwork. Winter session will run Mondays 5:30-6:30 p.m and Fridays 2:00-3:00 p.m from January 6th -March 7th in the 5th floor conference room. Registration is required. *For more information, scan the QR code to the left or contact Leanne Walz at 414-256-1955 or Amanda Hanson at 262-780-4255*

# Within The Community

## NEW Support Groups and Programs

### Milwaukee

- **Breast Cancer Support Group (In person)**  
Starting January, this support group will meet the second Thursday of each month from 12-1 p.m. in the radiation oncology department, garden level. *For more information, contact Paula Weckman at [paula.weckman@ascension.org](mailto:paula.weckman@ascension.org) or 414-206-3966.*
- **General Cancer Support Group (In person)**  
A support group for anyone who has or had cancer. Starting January, the General Cancer Support Group will meet the fourth Monday of the month from 12-1 p.m in the Radiation Oncology Department, garden level. *For more information, contact Beth Garbe at [elizabeth.garbe@ascension.org](mailto:elizabeth.garbe@ascension.org) or 414-585-1548.*



### Virtual Education

- **[Head and Neck Cancer Pre-recorded Educational Series](#)**  
A comprehensive virtual pre-recorded educational series for individuals diagnosed with head and neck cancers. The topics are adapted to address the specific need of cancer patients/survivors with head and neck cancers. You may register to watch part or all of this series. Scan the QR code below to learn more or to register.



- **[Healthy Eating Active Living Pre-recorded Educational Series](#)**  
A pre-recorded educational series that covers topics in cancer survivorship related to exercise, lymphedema, nutrition, and more! If you have any questions, please contact Ascension Wisconsin's Cancer Prevention/Wellness and Survivorship Nurse Coordinator: Kayla Thorne at [kayla.thorne@ascension.org](mailto:kayla.thorne@ascension.org) or (414)-212-5171. Scan the QR code to learn more or to register.



# Within The Community

## Healthy Eating Active Living Program(HEAL)

### A free program for breast cancer survivors

HEAL is a free healthy eating and active living program sponsored by the American Cancer Society through Kohl's Cares. Each HEAL program is 10 weeks long and consists of health education, nutrition counseling and exercise classes. In-person classes will be held at the New Berlin YMCA.

**\*\*Next session: January 7th 2025- March 11th, 2025; Tuesdays(in person) from 4:30-6p.m and Thursdays (virtually) 4:30-5:15p.m.**

### If you met this criteria, you are able to attend Ascension Wisconsin's Healthy Eating Active Living Program:

- Breast Cancer patients/survivors between the ages of 19-80
- Diagnosed with breast cancer
- Currently on treatment or have undergone treatment within the last three year
  - \*\*We are currently unable to accept breast cancer patients who are currently undergoing chemotherapy

### Ascension Wisconsin's Healthy Eating Active Living(HEAL) Program offers breast cancer patients and their support person:

- Personalized exercise programming
  - Individual assessments by two certified cancer exercise specialists, registered nurses
  - Rental Garmin vivoactive fitness tracker watches and free weights for at home use
  - 90-minute group sessions at the New Berlin YMCA
  - Free 3 month YMCA household membership
  - One Forest Therapy Walk
- Personalized nutrition planning
  - Diet assessment/SMART goal setting by a registered dietitian
  - Education on how to read nutrition labels
  - Education utilizing American Cancer Society Book " What to Eat During Cancer Treatment"
  - Two teaching kitchen

If you are interested in joining or have questions about Ascension Wisconsin's Healthy Eating Active Living (HEAL) program, please contact Kayla Thorne, Cancer Survivorship Nurse Coordinator, at [kayla.thorne@ascension.org](mailto:kayla.thorne@ascension.org) or (414) 212-5171.



Ascension



# Within The Community

## Cancer survivorship webpage

Ascension Wisconsin's Cancer Survivorship Program helps those from the point of diagnosis and continue through treatment and beyond.



Whether you are someone newly diagnosed, just completing treatment or ten plus years out of active treatment, you can be apart of our community. Our goal is to help you and your support system with: physical, emotional, mental, social and financial effects of a cancer diagnosis and treatment.

**In the Greater Milwaukee area, Racine and the Fox Valley, Ascension Wisconsin's Cancer Survivorship Program provides:**

- Online educational classes
- In-person or hybrid support groups
- Cancer survivorship classes
- Yoga
- Community-Based physical activity programs



These classes are designed to increase your knowledge of nutrition, provide options for physical activity, help you reduce stress, and improve your overall well-being. Visit our webpage by scanning the QR code above or by searching online [Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Survivorship Program](#).



[ascension.org](http://ascension.org)



**Scan the QR code to sign up to receive our quarterly newsletters electronically**

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