

Cancer Survivorship: The Next Frontier in Cancer Care Research

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March 5, 2026 By American Institute for Cancer Research

Key Takeaways:

- Cancer survivorship begins at diagnosis and lasts a lifetime. It includes physical, emotional, social and financial well-being, not just the period after treatment ends.
- Research shows lifestyle factors matter after cancer. Evidence links physical activity, nutrition and mental health support to better quality of life.
- Survivors can take an active role in their long-term health by staying informed, advocating for follow-up care and following evidence-based guidance on physical activity and healthy eating.

Most of the focus in cancer care goes to prevention and treatment since these are lifesaving steps. But what about life after treatment?

As more people live longer beyond a cancer diagnosis, it's increasingly important to address the long-term challenges that cancer survivors may face. Research can help ensure that they live longer, healthier lives.

What Is Survivorship?

A person is considered a cancer survivor from the time of diagnosis through the balance of life. Some survivors are living with cancer, and some are free of cancer.

Cancer survivorship includes the physical, mental, social and financial well-being of people from the time of diagnosis through the rest of their lives. It includes challenges like late treatment effects, [fear of recurrence](#) and ongoing care.

It's common for cancer care teams to include dietitians, exercise specialists, psychologists and [occupational therapists](#), who cover many aspects of care after treatment.

Research Leads to Recommendations

Recent studies have shown promising results in cancer survivorship care. Scientists are looking at how nutrition, physical activity, mental health care and other lifestyle factors affect quality of life.

For example, a recent study showed that colon cancer survivors who took part in a three-year exercise program had a 28 percent lower risk of cancer recurrence. This type of research helps healthcare practitioners make solid recommendations about exercise for colon cancer survivors.

Empowering Cancer Survivors

By staying informed, cancer survivors can:

- Advocate for better follow-up care
- Explore ways to manage side effects
- Find professional support services for physical and emotional well-being
- Meet fellow cancer survivors to mutual support

- Develop communication skills to navigate relationships with friends and family
- Learn strategies for stress-reduction

By focusing on physical activity, nutrition and addressing mental health needs, quality of life for cancer survivors can be improved.

CUP Global Advice on Breast Cancer Survivorship

Research in cancer survivorship continues to evolve. AICR is at the forefront as part of The Global Cancer Update Program (CUP Global).*

The CUP Global team reviewed research and developed guidance for breast cancer survivors to help improve quality of life. The [complete guidance is here](#) and is also summarized in [this infographic](#). It includes recommendations for breast cancer survivors to:

- Follow [AICR's 10 Cancer Prevention Recommendations](#)
- Avoid weight gain during and after treatment (unless you are underweight, then work with your healthcare team for advice).
- Be active and limit sedentary time. Aim for at least 150 minutes of aerobic activity throughout the week. Do muscle-strengthening activities two or more times per week.
- Eat a variety of fiber-rich foods daily. Good options are vegetables, fruits, whole grains, nuts and beans . If you enjoy soy, continue to eat soy foods such as tofu or edamame as part of your regular diet.

*CUP Global is produced by World Cancer Research Fund International in partnership with AICR, World Cancer Research Fund (UK) and Wereld Kanker Onderzoek Fonds (Netherlands)

The American Institute for Cancer Research helps the public understand the relationship between lifestyle, nutrition and cancer risk. We work to prevent cancer through innovative research, community programs and impactful public health initiatives.

[This article](#) was originally published January 31, 2026, by the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR). It is republished with permission.

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