

About you: Care after cancer

Survivorship newsletter

Summer 2025



Ascension



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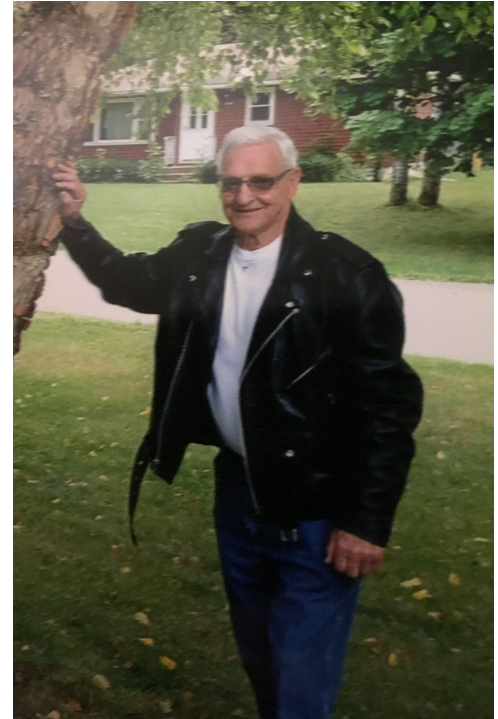
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Survivorship Story

Alvin U., Lymphoma Cancer Survivor

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

Last September, 2024, I knew something was wrong. I had this swelling in my right jaw. So I ended up going to urgent care, since I knew they would do something to help. They ended up referring me to a nose, throat, and ear specialist who put a flexible tube with a camera down my nose to look at my throat. This procedure did not show anything, but during the appointment with the nose, throat and ear specialist I also mentioned that I had a dental crown. The specialist referred me to see a dentist. The dentist did an xray and thought if they pulled the tooth it would resolve the problem. After the tooth was pulled, the swelling was still present. After visiting with my family doctor, he thought it was TMJ(temporomandibular joint dysfunction). When I went to visit another specialist, the TMJ doctor, he did not even have to do a physical exam to know it was not TMJ. As I sat there, the specialist called my primary doctor. I don't know what was all said, but I was then directed to get a bunch of scans like a CT, MRI, and PET scan.



The scan results were in. I had cancer or more specifically, lymphoma. I was told that I did not need radiation, but I did need chemotherapy. Dr. T set me up with six cycles of chemotherapy, three weeks apart. I was not sure what to expect. My youngest son was present from day one. You would think he was a nurse or doctor with all the questions and comments during my first chemotherapy. I remember getting chemotherapy called "the red devil." As I laid there getting my chemotherapy, I thought to myself don't worry, be happy. This is my motto I tell myself. If I worry, I'll get ulcers. The first chemotherapy day I was there for 7 hours. The next day, I had to go back to the hospital to get a shot that would help with my white blood cell count. I was concerned that night when I had a fever, but my provider told me it was expected.

As the weeks progressed, they sped up the chemotherapy. I went from being in the chemo chair for 7 hours to now about 4 hours. But because of my heart failure, my heart and lungs could not handle all that fluid. I started to experience shortness of breath which led me into being admitted to the hospital multiple times. I am almost done with all my chemotherapy cycles!

As I mentioned, I have three sons. My youngest, who attended my first round of chemotherapy lives in Wisconsin. My other two sons live in Alabama and another in Florida. They have helped support me through my diagnosis. I also have so many folks around me that offer to help. I even have a friend who has taken me to get chemotherapy a few times.

My life really hasn't changed too much after my diagnosis- I won't let it. Cancer isn't a good one, but as you look around many people have bad things happening and it could be worse. I know something will get me in the end, but you can't change it, you just have to take life in strides. I've always been someone on the go. I tell people how I have not sat still since I retired 33 years ago. I think that's why I have handled all this okay. The name of the game is to keep moving. I still go workout two days a week, doing both cardio and strength. I have my coffee shop where I see and help friends and have my daily coffee hour. I also still do everything around my senior living apartment. Just keep moving!

I'm a pretty lucky guy, I've gotten this far to almost hit 100 years old. I am actually Dr. T's oldest male patient she has ever had! I've had an 80th, 90th, and hopefully a 100th birthday party. My one son said to me that if I make it to 100 I could have his mustang convertible. That is my goal and I plan on making it! I even, luckily, have my currency driver's license till I am 101. I have only 4 years and so many months to go till I get to ride in my new convertible!



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

Cancer Survivorship

Stress in Survivorship



Rhodora Khan

DNP, FNP-BC, APNP

Rhodora C. Khan, APNP, is a nurse practitioner specializing in surgery at Ascension Wisconsin in Franklin, WI. Mrs. Khan is board-certified in family nursing the American Nurses Credentialing Center. She provides preventative breast care to high-risk breast patients. Mrs. Khan has a special interest in women's health. She strives to support and empower women with the knowledge to make better healthcare decisions and achieve the best possible health outcome. Her primary goal is to identify, counsel and manage the clinical surveillance of women at high risk for developing breast and/or ovarian cancers.

When I see cancer patients for survivorship visits, I always have a discussion about stress. How to recognize it and how to manage it. What is stress? Also known as psychological stress, it is what people experience when they are under mental, physical, or emotional pressure. Serious health issues, such as a cancer diagnosis in an individual or a close friend or family member can also cause stress.

Why do we need to talk about this topic? Research has shown that chronic stress can cause chemical changes in the body which contribute to problems like high blood pressure, the release of certain hormones and inflammation. Some studies suggest that stress-induced changes may increase the risk of conditions like heart disease and the growth and spread of cancer. But can it cause cancer? The studies are inconclusive. While stress itself doesn't directly cause cancer, research suggests it can influence the body's environment in ways that may increase the risk of cancer development or progression. Specifically, prolonged or chronic stress can lead to:

Suppression of the immune system:

Chronic stress may also be due to the release of a class of steroid hormones called glucocorticoids. Glucocorticoids may inhibit a type of tumor cell death called apoptosis and increased metastasis and resistance to chemotherapy. They may also prevent the body's immune system from recognizing and fighting cancer cells. Stress hormones like cortisol can weaken the immune system, making it less effective at detecting and eliminating abnormal cells that could lead to cancer.

Increased inflammation:

Chronic stress can contribute to a state of low-grade inflammation, which is a known factor in cancer development and progression. There is evidence that stress can activate an inflammatory response in the brain, as well as in the body.

Changes in hormonal balance:

Stress can affect hormone levels, which can impact the growth of some types of cancer, such as breast cancer.

Metastasis:

Some studies suggest that stress can promote the spread of cancer cells (metastasis) by altering the behavior of immune cells and creating a more hospitable environment for cancer cells in other parts of the body. There are studies linking stress to tumor growth in patients who already have cancer.

How To Manage Stress

When you were diagnosed with cancer, you might have focused completely on your treatment and getting healthy. Now that you've completed treatment, all those projects around the home and the things on your to-do list are competing for your attention. This can make you feel stressed and overwhelmed.

- You will only have so much energy, so learn to say no.
- Don't feel you need to do everything at once. Take time for yourself as you establish a new daily routine.
- Try exercising, talking with other cancer survivors and taking time for activities you enjoy.
- To manage stress as a cancer survivor, consider incorporating relaxation techniques like deep breathing, meditation, and yoga.
- Engage in regular physical activity, and prioritize healthy eating and sleep.
- Seeking support from friends, family, or support groups can also be beneficial. If necessary, consider professional help from a therapist or counselor.

Relaxation Techniques

- **Deep Breathing:** Practice diaphragmatic breathing, also known as belly breathing, which involves slow, deep breaths to calm the nervous system.
- **Meditation and Yoga:** These practices can help promote relaxation and mindfulness, reducing stress and anxiety.
- **Mindfulness:** Focus on the present moment, observing thoughts and feelings without judgment.
- **Physical Activity:** Engage in regular physical activity, such as walking, swimming, or cycling, as it can improve mood and reduce stress hormones.
- **Spending Time Outdoors:** Nature can be a great source of relaxation and stress relief.
- **Lifestyle Changes:**
 - **Healthy Eating:** Prioritize a balanced diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.
 - **Sufficient Sleep:** Aim for 7-8 hours of sleep per night.
 - **Hobbies:** Engage in activities you enjoy, such as reading, painting, or gardening, to reduce stress and promote relaxation.
- **Social Support:**
 - **Connect with Loved Ones:** Spend time with friends and family, as social connections can provide emotional support and reduce feelings of isolation.
 - **Join Support Groups:** Connect with other cancer survivors who can offer support and understanding.
- **Other Strategies:**
 - **Journaling:** Expressing your feelings through writing can be a helpful way to process emotions and reduce stress.
 - **Limit Over-Scheduling:** Avoid overwhelming yourself with commitments, and prioritize self-care.
 - **Be Mindful of Stress Triggers:** Identify and address potential stressors in your life.
 - **Personalized Approach:** What works for one person may not work for another, so experiment with different stress reduction techniques to find what works best for you.

Managing stress is a process, and it's important to be patient with yourself and allow yourself time to heal.

References: Stress and cancer: Is there a connection?

<https://www.cancercenter.com/community/blog/2024/06/stress-and-cancer>

Stress and Cancer

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/feelings/stress-fact-sheet>

Cancer survivors: Managing your emotions after cancer treatment

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/cancer/in-depth/cancer-survivor/art-20047129>

Time To Eat

Fact or Fiction: Does Sugar Feed Cancer?

By: Beth Kielas, RDN, CD

As an Oncology Dietitian, this is one of the most common questions I get asked by patients: Will eating sugar or carbs feed my cancer and make it grow? First, let's get straight to the answer: sugar does not "feed" cancer or cause cancer. Many are anxious about this topic and a quick google search or scan of social media can often only lead to more fear and questions. Let's review the facts.

Sugar is a simple carbohydrate. Carbohydrates are an essential energy source for every cell in our body. This includes cancer cells but here is where the misunderstanding often arises. All cells in the body consume sugar (glucose) for energy. Your body uses the energy from carbohydrates to keep vital organs functioning. Alongside fats and proteins, carbohydrates are one of the main nutrients our body needs to function.

The use of PET scans to diagnose cancer has helped fuel the myth that sugar "feeds" cancer. These scans use a sugar-based solution to detect cancer, highlighting areas where cancer cells rapidly consume sugar. However, this is because cells that use more energy, like cancer cells, will "gobble up" a disproportionate amount of the available sugar. It doesn't mean that dietary sugar is directly responsible for cancer growth.

There is no way for our bodies to use energy (carbohydrates) solely for the "good" cells while excluding the "bad" cells (cancer). Restricting intake of all carbohydrates, including sugar, has not been proved to be effective to treat or manage cancer. Research has not supported that eating sugar will make your cancer worse or that if you stop eating sugar your cancer will shrink/disappear.

Sugars are found naturally in some foods such as fruit and dairy products – these are often referred to as "natural sugars". It is recommended to consume "natural" sugars, such as the sugars found naturally in fruits, because these foods come packed with other important nutrients, including vitamins and minerals. Store-bought and processed products may have sugar added to them in order to enhance taste and palatability – these are referred to as "added sugars". Try to limit eating foods with "added sugars" as they are often low nutrition quality and excess calories.

It should be noted that excessive consumption of "added sugars" especially those in processed foods has been linked to an increased risk of developing cancer. This link may be due to the impact eating too much added sugars has on our health- such as increased risk of obesity and chronic inflammation rather than sugar directly "feeding" cancer cells or causing cancer.

Aim for a balanced plant-based diet that includes a mix of carbohydrates, proteins, and fats. It is not about cutting sugar out entirely! Balance is crucial for overall health and well-being.

Reference: <https://www.cancer.org>
<https://ascopubs.org/doi/full/10.1200/JCO.22.00687>
<https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/eat-smart/sugar/sugar-101>
<https://www.mskcc.org/news/no-sugar-no-cancer-look-evidence>
Adapted from: <https://anticancerlifestyle.org/>

Spiritual Care And You



Reverend Bob Turner

MDiv BCC

Reverend Bob Turner, MDiv BCC, has served as an outpatient oncology chaplain for over a decade throughout the Ascension metro-Milwaukee area. He is ordained and endorsed by the International Ministerial Fellowship and has extensive experience working with people of many faith traditions including those who are not religious. As the curator of the Ascension Wisconsin Spiritual Care Resource Library, Bob maintains and has developed numerous spiritual self-care resources available to our patients. Bob and many other Ascension Wisconsin chaplains are eager to serve cancer survivors.

For the cancer survivor, every part of your person can be affected. There are physical challenges, intrusive thoughts and possibly even spiritual crises. This is why spiritual care is recognised as an essential element of the care of patients with serious illnesses such as cancer. At Ascension Cancer Care Services, we are committed to provide care for the whole person – body, mind, spirit.

You may find yourself asking difficult questions even as you encounter strong feelings, especially when...

- You're anxious about your medical condition
- You are awaiting crucial test results
- You're going to have surgery or a medical procedure
- You're feeling sad, afraid, stressed, angry, hopeless, helpless, or lonely
- You face a difficult decision
- You need comfort
- You want someone to join you in prayer
- You or your family don't know where to turn
- You're asking God "Why?"

These are reasons why chaplains are here for you as spiritual care providers. They offer a comforting presence on your journey. Our trained, experienced, board certified chaplains are essential members of our healthcare team. Ascension cancer care chaplains recognize all faiths and beliefs. Whatever your spiritual outlook, these professionals are available to give you respectful, confidential, personal support.

At your request, one of our chaplains will connect with you and/or your loved ones about your spiritual needs. They can offer a listening presence, options for spiritual self-care,

connection with spiritual resources as well as faith communities online and in your community, all in accordance with your wishes, at your service. Our goal at Ascension is to provide you and your family with full spiritual support when you need it most. Consultation with a chaplain is always free of charge. If you wish to connect with a chaplain, please contact your Ascension cancer care clinic to have the chaplain call you.

A Prayer for Wellness and Healing

May God bless you. May God heal you.

May God give you strength.

May God protect your body.

May God be with you. May God sustain you.

May God encourage you on your journey.

May God give you perfect peace to guard your heart and mind.

Amen.

The Importance of Power of Attorney Documents

By: Leanne Walz, MSW, OSW-C

Myth - I am married, so my spouse is my Power of Attorney automatically

Myth - My family knows my wishes so I don't have to be concerned about legal forms

Myth - My oldest child will just take over

Myth - I told my doctor's office who they can talk to about my care

Myth - They are for elderly or very sick people and I am not at that point in life

Hospitals and doctors often ask patients if they have a Power of Attorney. Many people admit that they have the papers, they just need to be filled out. The problem is that the forms look overwhelming, there are many pages, and there is a tremendous amount of words and lingo to pour over. Between the myths, barriers, and hesitation to face the uncomfortable realities of health changes, Power of Attorney documents often remain on a "to do list", year after year. But it is essential to proactively complete Power of Attorney documents, and your oncology social worker is there to help with this if desired.

Here is what you need to know about these important documents.

Power of Attorney (POA) documents are necessary for allowing individuals to appoint someone to handle their financial and/or health care decisions if they become unable to themselves, due to illness or injury.

There are two types of Power of Attorney:

1. Power of Attorney for Healthcare (POAHC) for medical decision-making
2. Durable Power of Attorney (DPOA), which is focused on managing financial matters only.

Having both forms drafted in the event they are ever needed avoids having to seek a court-appointed guardianship, which can be time-consuming and expensive. Power of attorney forms can be completed without a cost. One of the best ways to do this is by working with your oncology social worker on the POAHC. Social workers can also provide a State of Wisconsin DPOA form for your completion. Both documents are also printable off of the WI Department of Health Services website (<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/forms/advdirectives>). The POAHC does not require a notary. It is possible to complete these documents on your own, however this can be more time consuming and errors can happen. It would be recommended to have the forms reviewed by a professional to ensure they are valid and accurately reflect your wishes

In regards to myths surrounding Power of Attorney documents, please consider these points. At age 18 we become legal adults, and this is the age we should put into place POA's to cover us if something unforeseen happens. At that age, no one is legally responsible for us any longer. Additionally, marriage does not automatically make our spouse our POAHC. Some married persons feel someone else besides their spouse might be better suited to be their POAHC and they name another family member or close friend. Doctors and hospitals cannot assume whom a patient wants to make their medical decisions. Nor can they take someone's word when dealing with life and death matters-they must rely on legal documents. Please note that the Involvement in Care or Spokesperson documents completed at the hospital or doctor's offices are not legal decision-making documents, and do not replace the need to have a completed POAHC or DPOA.

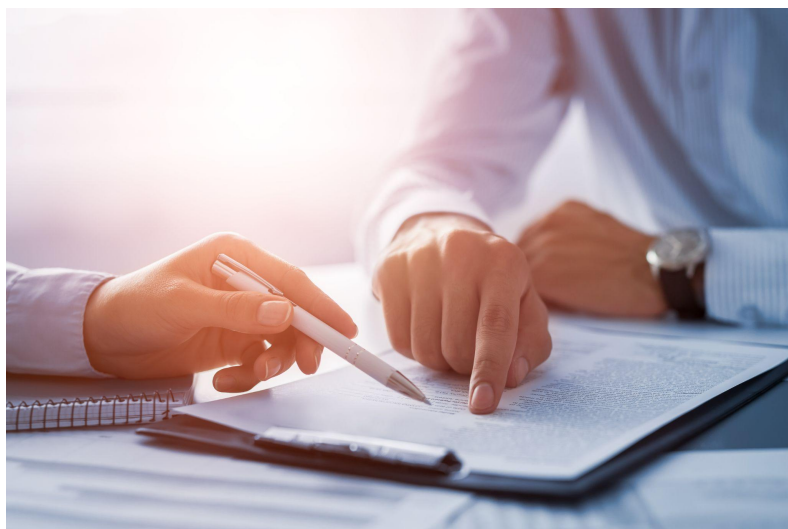
Please feel free to call your oncology clinic's social worker with any questions, or for more information or assistance.

You might also find the following websites helpful for further discussion on this topic:

<https://www.wisbar.org/forpublic/ineedinformation/pages/health-care.aspx>

<https://www.wisbar.org/forPublic/INeedInformation/Pages/Powers-of-Attorney.aspx>

<https://triagecancer.org/quick-guides/advance-health-care-directive>



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



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*

Fox Valley

- **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 or carrie.olm@ascension.org*
- **A Time To Heal (In person)**
A FREE 9-week program designed to help cancer survivors of any cancer diagnosis regain their physical, emotional, and spiritual health after cancer treatment. During this program you will work with trained facilitators and meet others who understand your journey. These weekly sessions provide evidence based advice on topics including nutrition, exercise, building resilience, and moving forward in the face of fear. Next session starts September 17th at Festival Foods in Neenah, on Wednesdays, from 2:30-4 p.m. *For more information, visit [Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Survivorship webpage](#) or contact kayla.thorne@ascension.org*



Within The Community

Support Groups and Programs

Milwaukee

- **Breast Cancer Support Group (In person)**
Meets the second Thursday of each month from 12-1:00 p.m. in the radiation oncology department, garden level. *For more information, contact Paula Weckman at paula.weckman@ascension.org or 414-206-3966.*
- **General Cancer Support Group (In person)**
Meets the fourth Monday of the month from 12-1:00 p.m. in the Radiation Oncology Department, garden level. *For more information, contact Beth Garbe at elizabeth.garbe@ascension.org or 414-585-1548.*

Wauwatosa/Elmbrook/Franklin

- **Journey to Wellness (In person)**
Meets the first Wednesday of each month from 10-11:00 a.m. at the Chapel of Reiman Cancer Center. *For more information, contact biannca.kramer@ascension.org*
- **Healthy Eating Active Living Program (In person)**
A free healthy eating active living program for female cancer survivors ages 19-80 years old. Next program will be start September 8th at the New Berlin YMCA from 4:30-6 p.m. *For more information, visit Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Survivorship webpage or contact kayla.thorne@ascension.org*

- **A Time To Heal (In person)**
A FREE 9-week program designed to help cancer survivors of any cancer diagnosis regain their physical, emotional, and spiritual health after cancer treatment. Next 9 week session starts September 4th, every Thursday for 9 weeks from 2- 4 p.m. at 201 N Mayfair Road. *For more information, visit Ascension Wisconsin Cancer Survivorship webpage or contact kayla.thorne@ascension.org*
- **Coping with Cancer Support Group (In person)**
Meets the third Tuesday of each month from 12-1 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 (In person)**
Meets the first Thursday of each month from 10-11:00 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 (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. Registration is required. *For more information, contact Leanne Walz at 414-256-1955 or Amanda Hanson at 262-780-4255*

Within The Community

NEW Living Beyond Breast Cancer Series

About the series

A free virtual only, survivorship series is designed for young breast cancer patients (45 years old and younger) who have been newly diagnosed, are in active treatment, or have completed treatment. This series will give you tips and tools to help you cope with your diagnosis and common side effects, build confidence, and empower you to take charge of your health. You may select to join us for the entire four week series or select the certain sessions you are interested in.

Topics covered

- Early or treatment induced menopause
- Managing the Long-Term Effects of Breast Cancer
- Intimacy
- Self-Care After Breast Cancer

Registration

Virtual Sessions will be offered Tuesdays from 5:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. CST starting September 2nd, 2025 - September 23rd, 2025. Scan the QR code below to register. **Registration is required.**

