



# Breast Cancer Survivorship

There are more than 2.5 million breast cancer survivors in the United States today. The good news is that there are many things you can do to enjoy a high quality of life and decrease your chance of recurrence.

## What is Survivorship?

Survivorship begins at the time of a cancer diagnosis and continues throughout your life. Today more and more women are living longer after breast cancer. This is due to earlier detection and better treatments. As such, breast cancer is now recognized as a chronic condition. This means the focus has shifted to long-term care for survivors.

## What are the issues?

The treatment of breast cancer continues beyond the active phase. However, many women are “lost” in the transition from patient to survivor. They may not seek additional assistance or support because their cancer treatment is over. Studies have shown that women have unfulfilled medical, psychological and social needs following active cancer treatment.

## What can I do?

Lifestyle changes after breast cancer treatment can decrease the chance of recurrence and improve your quality of life. Consider, for example:

### Body Mass Index (BMI)

An elevated BMI is associated with an increased risk of breast cancer recurrence. If your BMI is greater than 30, it is important to talk with your doctor about weight loss.

## Exercise

Exercise is beneficial in improving quality of life, managing stress, reducing fatigue and increasing energy. Exercise also promotes a sense of well being.

Many studies have shown exercise in breast cancer survivors can reduce the risk of recurrence and improve survival rates, regardless of age or menopausal status. Talk with your doctor before beginning any exercise program.

## Stress Reduction

Stress can cause health problems and decreased feelings of well-being. Ways to manage stress include exercise, social activities, support groups, and some complementary therapies. Ask your doctor about taking a stress management class.

## Tobacco Use

Tobacco use is linked to an increased risk of at least 15 types of cancers. If you smoke or use tobacco, quitting will improve your overall health. Ask your doctor about resources to help you quit.

## Nutrition

Eating a well-balanced diet is key to a healthy weight and lifestyle. Talk with your doctor about meeting with a registered dietitian.

## Skin Care

There is a known relationship between breast cancer and melanoma. Excessive UV exposure and lack of sunscreen use may increase your risk of developing skin cancer. Limit sun exposure, use sunscreen regularly, and wear protective clothing.

Many women use caffeine to help with the chronic fatigue that comes with breast cancer treatment. However, excessive use of caffeine may lead to sleep disturbances and an increase in anxiety levels. Use caffeine in moderation.

Kaiser Permanente staff will review your diagnosis and treatment. We will monitor you for recurrence, go over your medications, and help you achieve a healthy lifestyle through the many programs that we offer.

Contact your primary care provider if you develop any of the following symptoms:

- Not all symptoms indicate recurrence.**

- [www.kp.org/healthylifestyles](http://www.kp.org/healthylifestyles); offers a variety of management plans
- [cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/survivorship](http://cancer.gov/cancertopics/coping/survivorship); National Cancer Institute's website and resources on Survivorship
- [www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship](http://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship) American Cancer Society's Website and resources on Survivorship

- [www.kp.org](http://www.kp.org); offers access to health and drug encyclopedia, interactive programs, health classes, and much more
- Contact your local Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center for health information, programs, and other resources.

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