

HOPE & HEALING

A guide to helping survivors navigate through their journey

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Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Call Center: [404.531.4444](tel:404.531.4444)



Cancer Treatment and Men's Sexual Health: Understanding the Changes

By Princeton Stewart, LCSW

From diagnosis to post-treatment, the cancer journey can be a difficult process for patients and their family members. Cancer treatment is often multifaceted and is accompanied by various lifestyle changes. One unexpected change that can have significant ramifications is sexual health, an important aspect of adulthood that is rarely discussed due to the private nature of this topic. This "code of silence" can negatively impact patient populations, particularly men, who are living with a cancer diagnosis and may already be less likely to seek supportive resources during treatment. Men who have been diagnosed with cancer may experience mental, physical, and social changes, which could negatively impact their sexual health.

Expected Changes:

- **Mental:** Increase in depression and anxiety, distorted self-image, increase in negative thinking
- **Physical:** Decrease in libido, erectile dysfunction and premature ejaculation, changes to testosterone levels, changes in bowel functions and controllability, fatigue/tiredness, physical pain
- **Social:** Redefining expression of masculinity, navigating perceived social shame, acceptance of reality, openness to restructure future sex life

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From behavioral changes to creative exploration, there are several interventions (see figure below) that can assist men with navigating cancer treatment while maintaining a healthy sex life. Patients are encouraged to review these recommendations with their romantic partners and medical professionals so they can identify the interventions that work best for their lifestyle.

Possible Ways to Manage Sexual Health Issues

- ✓ Engage in supportive mental health counseling with a cancer-specific mental health professional (e.g., oncology clinical social worker, psychiatrist, sex therapist) as needed for ongoing management of mental health symptoms
- ✓ Have hormone levels checked (if applicable) to rule out any underlying medical conditions
- ✓ Speak with your healthcare provider about erectile dysfunction or premature ejaculation and any available medication or medical procedures to address these issues
- ✓ Be creative: utilize alternative sexual techniques and/or positions that don't amplify physical pain; consider sexual wellness items to enhance overall satisfaction
- ✓ Become more familiar with your body – this can promote renewed body acceptance, allows you to re-learn your body and can reduce associated sexual anxiety by becoming more comfortable with your new sex life moving forward
- ✓ Talk with your mental health professional and romantic partner to address negative thinking, shame, and/or any other additional roadblocks to a healthy sex life
- ✓ Incorporate an individualized self-care routine that includes physical (exercise, walking, yoga), mental (journaling, meditating), and spiritual (prayer, if applicable) interventions to promote an overall holistic plan of care
- ✓ Research unknown sexual activities, tools or devices and materials to ensure your sex life is rarely stagnant or repetitive

Knowing where to seek help or gain information is key to addressing concerns related to sexual health. For more information on support groups and behavioral health resources, please visit Northside Hospital Cancer Institute website, northside.com/services/cancer-institute/support-and-survivorship, or call the Behavioral Health Services office at **404.851.8960**.



ASK AN EXPERT

Genomics and Precision Medicine: What You Need To Know

By Porscha Johnson, PharmD, CPGx, Susan Kearney and Natalie Townsend



Genomics is the study of all of our genes, our whole set of DNA – called the genome. Our DNA has all the data needed to build our bodies. If DNA

changes, normal body processes change, and these changes can lead to diseases like cancer. Genomics plays a big part in precision medicine, which tailors treatment based on a person's genes, lifestyle and environment. In cancer care, precision medicine uses facts about a person's tumor to help physicians make treatment choices. The tumor data comes from biomarker or molecular testing.

A key part of precision medicine is pharmacogenomics, which studies how genes affect the way a person reacts to various medicines. Pharmacogenomics removes the "one size fits all" treatment plan by utilizing personal genome and biomarker information to develop a personalized treatment plan. This process is vital for effective individualized treatment planning and cancer therapy optimization.

The use of genomics can also improve health equity in cancer care. We know minorities are under-represented in clinical trials, including studies related to drug development and genomics. Without more minority data, researchers struggle to address genetic issues in minority populations. An in-depth understanding and application of pharmacogenomics through greater minority biomarker testing and clinical trial participation is important for an all-inclusive treatment approach towards true precision medicine.

Leading the way in precision medicine, the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute's Cancer Genomics Team can help oncologists with complex cases by providing customized therapy recommendations. This team includes an oncology pharmacist, molecular pathologist, research nurse, genetic counselor, and medical oncologists. For more information about the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Genomics program and to discuss whether this would be a good fit for you, please talk to your provider.



BOOST YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS



Living an Anti-Inflammatory Lifestyle

By Addie Ackerson, MSHA, RDN, CSO, LD

Are you looking to live an anti-inflammatory lifestyle? Let's talk about what foods to incorporate, and what behaviors to choose. The Standard American Diet promotes inflammation, as it is high in refined starches and saturated fats. This "Westernized" eating style is high in red meats, processed meats, restaurant food, sweets, desserts, French fries, and refined grains, which can cause inflammation. As you focus on decreasing these inflammatory foods, start increasing vegetables, fruits and foods high in omega 3 fatty acids (like fish, nuts and seeds). These foods are where the natural antioxidants and fiber are located! More of these foods create a plant-centric, anti-inflammatory diet.

Foods such as Ezekiel bread, lentils, beans, wheat germ, garlic, onions, leeks, chives, scallions and ground flax seeds have prebiotic properties, which means the good bacteria in your gut feed off them and flourish. Do not forget your gut health is linked to your immune system health.

You can use Ezekiel bread for your morning toast or veggie and hummus sandwich! Other ways to use some of these foods is to try homemade leek or bok choy soup! Ground flax seeds, walnuts and wheat germ are high in omega 3 fatty acids, which are

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Living an Anti-Inflammatory Lifestyle *(continued from page 2)*

anti-inflammatory fats. Try these toppings in your oatmeal with cinnamon and frozen cherries!

Chronic inflammation is linked to excessive caloric intake and obesity. Eating 20-30% fewer calories while maximizing micronutrient-dense foods (fruits, vegetables, whole grains) and minimizing energy dense foods can have powerful anti-inflammatory effects over months to years. Try limiting ultra-processed foods like fast food, chips, and sweets, etc. These foods are super sweet, salty and fatty, which make it easy to overindulge.

Stress, inactivity and depression also increase inflammation and lead to less healthy food choices, which in turn promotes low-grade chronic inflammation. So, address your stress and remember your brain and gut have a vigorous, ongoing dialogue.

Cook often with spices like garlic, ginger, and turmeric. Try this Tomato-Turmeric-Black Pepper Soup for all the anti-inflammatory benefits!

Oncology nutrition services are available at many of our NHCI locations. Please call 404.236.8036.

Recipe Corner: Tomato-Turmeric-Black Pepper Soup

Ingredients

¾ cup cherry tomatoes
1 can diced tomatoes (do not drain)
½ cup veggie broth (low sodium)
1 minced onion
2 minced garlic cloves
2 teaspoons turmeric powder
1 teaspoon coconut oil
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 teaspoon dried basil
1 tablespoon apple cider vinegar
Ground pepper to taste

Directions

1. Cook the onion and garlic in coconut oil for one minute.
2. Add the turmeric and cherry tomatoes and cook until tomatoes are soft.
3. Add canned tomatoes, veggie broth, apple cider vinegar and basil.
4. After bringing to a boil, let it simmer for about 5 minutes.
5. Blend the soup in a blender or immersion blender until creamy.
6. Season with black pepper!!!!



References:

Stress, Food, and Inflammation: Psychoneuroimmunology and Nutrition at the Cutting Edge. Janice K. Kiecolt-Glaser, Ph.D. *Psychosom Med.* 2010 May; 72(4):365-369.
Oncology Nutrition for Clinical Practice Second Edition



STORIES OF HOPE & HEALING*

Survivor Story: Meet Andrea (Survivor) and Bev (Wife & Caregiver)



What are the events that led to your cancer diagnosis?

I had a rare lymphoma in my back that did not require any treatment. Even though I did not require treatment, I was

followed for fifteen years by an oncologist to review bloodwork and check on the lymphoma. In late 2020, I was diagnosed with multiple myeloma. I am grateful that I was being followed by an oncologist for my lymphoma to help quickly discover the multiple myeloma.

What treatment did you receive?

I received standard treatments to help put me into remission. I received three types of medicines –

two subcutaneous cancer drug injections and one oral drug. I received twelve treatments over the course of three to four months, which led to disease remission. After I was in remission, the doctor removed my good stem cells and froze them. I then received chemotherapy. After chemo, I received a stem cell transplant.

How and where did you receive support during your treatment and recovery?

My support system started with my wife of thirty years and caregiver, Bev. I also had several friends that offered to drive me to my clinic appointments and set up a meal train. I befriended a woman name Laura who had also been diagnosed with multiple myeloma

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Survivor Story: Meet Andrea (Survivor) and Bev (Wife & Caregiver) *(continued from page 3)*

a year before me. Laura was able to provide helpful information about the diagnosis and general pieces of advice to help me through my cancer journey. I would love to be a "Laura" for someone else on this journey.

Did you utilize patient support resources at Northside Hospital Cancer Institute (NHCI)?

I frequently spoke with the pharmacists and nurses at Northside Hospital. The pharmacy staff was excellent!

What advice do you have for someone navigating their treatment and recovery journey?

My advice is to try to stay as positive as you can. Do not be afraid to welcome support in whatever way it comes. Make sure to listen to your doctors. Concentrate on getting well, receiving love and doing what you are supposed to do. If you have something that's bothering you, do not be afraid to ask questions. Have confidence in your medical staff.

*Patients' stories are based on individual experiences. The process from diagnosis through treatment may vary as well as symptoms, side effects and provider recommendations.

What advice do you have for caregivers who are helping someone navigating their treatment and recovery journey?

Reach out and accept help and support. Know that the cancer journey not only affects the patient but also affects the caregiver. Trying to go through the journey alone without support adds to the stress of the situation. Tap into any network you have for friends and family to help you get through the journey.

Where are you in your treatment journey?

I am currently in the maintenance phase of my journey where I am monitored monthly by my primary oncologist, Dr. Daniel Carr. In this phase, I receive lenalidomide every twenty one days with seven days off. I also receive a monthly infusion of zoledronic acid for osteoporosis and lab work. Every six months I complete a skeletal scan and a bone marrow biopsy, which will decrease to once a year after my first year of the maintenance phase. I also have upcoming appointments to stay up to date on my vaccinations. Most notably, my hair has grown back, and I now have beautiful salt and pepper hair!



COMMUNITY SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Blood and Marrow Transplant Program Reunion Held at Zoo Atlanta

On Saturday, October 15, 2022, nearly 330 bone marrow transplant survivors gathered for a reunion at Zoo Atlanta. The Blood and Marrow Transplant Program at Northside is one of the largest and most comprehensive programs of its kind in the Southeast and has among the best survival rates in the nation.



Do you have a question you would like answered by an expert or a story to share in a future issue of Hope & Healing? If so, please send your questions or stories to survivornewsletter@northside.com.

New! Head and Neck Cancer Support Group



Cancer Support Community Atlanta is now offering a Head and Neck Cancer Support group both in-person and virtually. Individuals in this group can connect with others living with head and neck cancer to share their experiences and gain support. To participate in this support group, please email mariam@cscatlanta.org. To learn about other support groups, visit the Northside Cancer Support & Survivorship page: northside.com/services/cancer-institute/support-and-survivorship.

Pearls of Wisdom

Various patients receiving care at Northside Hospital Cancer Institute provided “pearls of wisdom” to help other patients and their caretakers navigate the cancer journey:

“Your mind is a powerful thing – focus on the positive and enjoy the little things each day.”

“Use your resources that are provided – Network of Hope – having someone outside of your family circle to talk to is really helpful. A way to connect and unload.”

“Network of Hope through the Cancer Institute allowed me to make friends and provided me with the opportunity to give back through volunteering at Northside Hospital.”

“Camp Hope gave me the opportunity to find a community of people who were traveling the same path.”



EVENTS & CANCER CELEBRATIONS

CANCER SCREENING & PREVENTION

Prostate Cancer Screenings

February 16, 2023 @ Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology – Forsyth from 5:30-8 p.m.

**2023 Screenings
Expanding
to Conyers**

Skin Cancer Screening

March 14, 2023 @ Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology – Midtown from 6-8 p.m.

Built To Quit – Smoking and Tobacco Cessation Course

Next six-week session start date: March 7, 2023

Weekly classes are available in-person or virtually.



Upcoming Cancer Awareness Months

January: Cervical Cancer

February: Gallbladder/Bile Duct Cancer and National Cancer Prevention Month

March: Colorectal Cancer, Kidney Cancer and Multiple Myeloma

COMMUNITY EVENTS

[National Dress in Blue Day for Colon Cancer Awareness](#)

March 3, 2023

[Lustgarten Foundation’s Atlanta Walk for Pancreatic Cancer](#)

March 26, 2023 @ 8:30 a.m. @ Porsche Experience Center in Atlanta



CANCER SUPPORT COMMUNITY ATLANTA EVENTS

[Cancer Transitions](#)

For 2023, Cancer Transitions workshops will be held in February, April, August and October. Cancer Transitions is a free four-week workshop designed to help cancer survivors make the transition from active treatment to survivorship. Each week participants will meet for a 90-minute virtual session to discuss important topics focused on health and wellbeing. For more information and registration, please email mariam@cscatlanta.org.



[An Update: What You Should Know About Cardio-Oncology](#)

Thursday, February 23, 12-1:00 p.m.

Featuring: Dr. Lalitha Medepalli, Medical Director of Northside Hospital Cardio-Oncology Program and Board Certified Cardio-Oncologist

Moderated by: Dr. Cheryl Jones, Medical Oncologist with Georgia Cancer Specialists

Did you know those diagnosed with cancer are at a higher risk of developing late-onset cardiovascular complications? Attend this live virtual program to hear Dr. Lalitha Medepalli provide an update on cardio-oncology, review when to begin discussing cardio-oncology with your healthcare team, and discuss ways to optimize cardiac health. Dr. Cheryl Jones will moderate this program where participants have the opportunity to ask questions.

Click [here](#) to sign up to receive the Survivorship Newsletter in your inbox.

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