



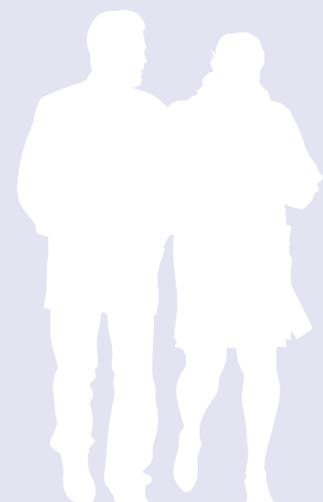
Maintenance therapy:
STAYING in
REMISSION
after treatment

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

You or your loved one is living with a type of blood cancer. You have just learned that the cancer has responded well to treatment, and you are in remission. What can you do to optimize your health so you can remain in remission and reduce your risk of relapse for as long as possible?

This fact sheet will tell you all about maintenance therapy:

- Find out why and when it is used
- New treatment options
- Get tips to stay healthy after treatment
- Watch for signs of relapse
- Know what questions to ask your healthcare team





Taking care of your overall health and well-being is important in remission.

About maintenance therapy

Maintenance therapy is treatment given after the first (primary) therapy used to manage your cancer, or lower your risk of the cancer coming back. Some people may use maintenance therapy for a long time. This type of therapy can include drugs, vaccines, antibodies, or hormones.

Maintenance therapy can be used after a stem cell transplant for a blood cancer or after your first therapy if a stem cell transplant is not an option or not recommended for you. Maintenance therapy is often given at a low intensity, but over a long period of time. The goal is to help keep you in remission and to prevent relapse (also known as cancer recurrence).

Blood cancers and maintenance therapy

Maintenance therapy has a role to play in some types of blood cancers such as multiple myeloma and acute myeloid leukemia (AML). Acute means the disease progresses quickly. AML is the most common acute leukemia in adults.

New treatments offer hope

- Researchers are working on maintenance therapy options to help reduce your risk of relapse
- One such option is an oral drug, recently approved by Health Canada
- It is a new type of therapy that can extend remission for people living with AML
- This drug is used to treat adults who have completed their first therapy and are in remission but are not eligible for transplant at the time (either because the transplant is not needed or recommended in their situation).
- Your healthcare team may recommend a similar maintenance treatment after a stem cell transplant for specific situations. (Some treatments are part of research studies.)

Staying healthy after treatment

Consult your healthcare team to create a plan to stay healthy and in remission. The plan should consider your specific cancer type, treatment history, age, and personal needs. Focusing on your health can help reduce your risk of relapse.

Here are some general tips:

- Eat a healthy diet and keep a healthy weight. Add lots of fruit and vegetables to your diet, avoid processed meats, and choose whole grains.
- Exercise regularly. Physical activity helps with your overall mood and can help reduce stress.
- Get a good night's sleep.
- Drink lots of water.
- Manage stress. Try yoga or join a patient support group and get help if you need it.
- Avoid tobacco and limit alcohol.
- Talk to your healthcare team about the pros and cons of continuing to work.
- Follow your treatment plan and work closely with your healthcare team.
- Get help to deal with appointment anxiety.
- Focus on the positive.
- Stay informed.
- Build a strong support system of friends and family.

COMPLETE REMISSION means there are no signs of cancer. It doesn't mean you are cured. It means that there's no evidence of cancer in your body. It can last for months or even years.

PARTIAL REMISSION means the cancer has stopped growing.

Watch for signs of relapse

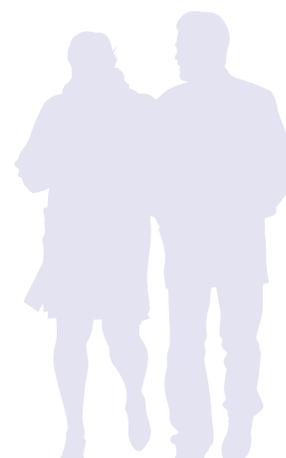
Watching for signs and symptoms of relapse is important. Relapse is when the cancer signs and symptoms return. The cancer can come back in the same part of your body as before, or a different part.

Cancer returns for different reasons. The cancer may not have responded well to the first treatment, or the treatment didn't get rid of all the cancer cells. The cancer may have spread. Some people may become resistant to the drugs. It can depend on the type and stage of cancers as some cancers are more likely to return.



Whatever the reason, it's important to look for signs and symptoms of relapse. They vary depending on the type of cancer and treatment. Talk to your healthcare team about what to watch for and when you should seek medical help. Here are examples to look for:

- Fatigue
- Fever and night sweats
- Bruising or bleeding
- Decreased appetite and weight loss
- Shortness of breath
- Headaches
- Infections
- Unexplained pain
- Swollen lymph nodes
- Itching and a rash



Questions to ask your healthcare team

- How often should I see you to monitor my progress?
- What can I do to manage my health while in remission?
- What are my chances of relapse?
- What are the typical signs of relapse for my cancer?
- When should I contact you if I see signs of relapse?
- Are there any activities I should avoid?
- Should I work during treatment and when I'm in remission?
- Will the treatment affect my ability to have children?
What are the risks?
- Do you recommend maintenance therapy? What type?
- What are the potential benefits? What are the risks?
- What are the side effects of maintenance therapy?
- How long does maintenance therapy need to be taken?
- Do you know of any clinical trials that might help maintain my health?
- What resources do you recommend for learning how to manage my health while in remission?



Your healthcare team is there to support you throughout your treatment. Be sure to contact them if you have side effects so they can be managed quickly. It's important that you attend all your follow-up appointments.

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Never hesitate to contact us, we're here to help!

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