My journey

Alberta Cancer
FOUNDATION

Redefining the future
together

Your cancer care journal

Your cancer care journal is an Alberta Cancer Foundation gift as you go through your cancer journey.

This journal can be a central place for you to

- schedule appointments and social activities
- write down your questions or concerns
- monitor your emotional and spiritual health
- help you manage your own care
- plan a physical activity schedule
- maintain good nutrition
- store medical documents
- track side effects

Recording your journey in this journal will help both you and your care team as it allows you to

- have one location to access your reports, test results, imagery, and other important medical documents
- monitor your own recovery, helping your care team solve any problems during the healing process
- have a complete record of your cancer diagnosis and treatment to show any new health-care providers

Everyone's cancer journey is unique. Your cancer care journal is a personal record of your experience and has useful worksheets and tips to help you keep an active role in your care.

Table of contents

Section 1: **Medical details** 6

Keep handouts and medical documents in the folder that came with your journal. Write down important information in the spaces provided. This section will be useful when you meet a new doctor or nurse or have a question about test results.

- My diagnosis
- My treatment plan and progress
- My medical history
- My treatment medications
- My side effects medications
- My side effects record
- My questions
- My blood counts

Section 2: **My appointments** 32

With ongoing treatments, follow-up appointments, social activities, and support, the cancer journey can be a busy time. This section lets you keep all your appointments in one place.

Section 3: **Sources of help** 58

There is a lot of help out there for people with cancer and their families. This section has information on some of the most common resources.

- Cancer centres
- Clinical trials
- New patient information sessions
- Nutrition departments
- Patient education
- Cancer patient navigation
- Care concerns
- Rehabilitation
- Psychosocial support
- Spiritual care and counselling services
- Quitting smoking

Section 4: **Managing my health during treatment** 76

During treatment, you can take an active role in your health by monitoring and managing both your physical and emotional wellbeing. This section provides tips and worksheets to help with coping and adjustment, nutrition and physical activity.

Section 5: **Managing my health after treatment** 100

People who face cancer often say they are forever changed. There is a sense of finding a "new normal," both physically and emotionally. This section provides quick tips and worksheets to help you adjust to your new normal and understand nutrition and physical activity guidelines for the future.

Section 6: **Redefining the future – together** 112

The Alberta Cancer Foundation is pushing for accelerated change, progress and above all, results. Learn moreabout how we're making a difference today through this section.

Section 7: **Glossary** 118

Paste photo here

Redefining the future
together

Attach a photo of yourself with friends or family.

About me

My name is .....

My contact info:

.....
ADDRESS

.....
CITY PROVINCE POSTAL CODE

.....
HOME PHONE CELL PHONE

.....
EMAIL

My birthday is .....

My blood type is A B AB O

.....
ALBERTA HEALTH-CARE NUMBER

.....
CANCER CARE NUMBER

My emergency contacts are:

.....
NAME

.....
HOME PHONE CELL PHONE

.....
NAME

.....
HOME PHONE CELL PHONE

My important contact numbers

My cancer doctor (oncologist or hematologist)

NAME

PHONE

My nurse practitioner

NAME

PHONE

My cancer clinic

MAIN CLINIC PHONE

CARE DEPARTMENT PHONE

CARE DEPARTMENT PHONE

EMERGENCY PHONE

HOME CARE PHONE

My family doctor

NAME PHONE

My pharmacies / drugstores

CANCER CENTRE PHARMACY PHONE

NAME PHONE

My top personal contacts

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Telephone Nursing Service

Cross Cancer Institute	780.432.8919
Tom Baker Cancer Centre	403.521.3735

HEALTHLink Alberta – 24 hours a day 7 days a week nurse telephone advice and health information service.

Toll free	1.866.408.LINK (5465)
Calgary	403.943.LINK (5465)
Edmonton	780.408.LINK (5465)

myhealth.alberta.ca

Did you know?

You can paste important business cards on the inside back cover of your cancer care journal for quick reference.

It is the trouble that never comes that causes the loss of sleep.

Chas. Austin Bates

Section 1:

Medical details

My diagnosis

Your doctor will explain your diagnosis. Write this information here for quick reference.

Date I was diagnosed .....

My diagnosis .....

.....

.....

T (tumour size): .....

N (lymph node involvement): .....

M (metastases): .....

Grade: .....

Stage: .....

Hormone status: .....

Notes

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My treatment plan and progress

Place a check mark beside all of the treatment descriptions that apply to you.
Then keep a brief record of these treatments in the space provided below each type.

Surgery

When I received surgery

- ◯ As the 1st treatment for my cancer
- ◯ After I had radiation treatments to shrink the tumour
- ◯ After I had chemotherapy treatments to shrink the tumour
- ◯ To remove tumours during the process of my care

◯ Other: .....

My surgery record:

DATE	REASON
SURGEON	LOCATION
DATE	REASON
SURGEON	LOCATION
DATE	REASON
SURGEON	LOCATION
DATE	REASON
SURGEON	LOCATION

My treatment plan continued

Radiation therapy

When I received radiation therapy treatments

- ◯ As the 1st and only planned treatment for my cancer
- ◯ Before surgery to shrink the tumour
- ◯ After surgery to attack any remaining cancer cells
- ◯ Along with chemotherapy to attack cancer cells
- ◯ To reduce my pain or symptoms during my other treatments
- ◯ As part of a stem cell transplant

◯ Other: .....

My radiation treatment plan:

Radiation start date.....

Planned number of treatments.....

Planned frequency of treatments.....

Use calendar section starting on page 32 to mark specific treatment dates.

I received an internal radiation therapy treatment

◯ Had internal implants (brachytherapy) as my main treatment

Treatment date .....

◯ Drank a liquid radioactive substance to treat my thyroid cancer after surgery

Treatment date .....

Chemotherapy

When I received chemotherapy

- ◯ As my 1st and only planned treatment
- ◯ Before my surgery to shrink the tumour
- ◯ After my surgery to attack any remaining cancer cells
- ◯ Along with radiation therapy to attack cancer cells
- ◯ As part of a stem cell transplant
- ◯ Other: .....

Did you know?

You are not alone.

Every day, 43 Albertans will hear the words "You have cancer." The Alberta Cancer Foundation invests in the 17 cancer centres across the province to ease your journey. Find important connections in the sources of help section of this book, page 58.

My 1st chemotherapy treatment plan:

- ◯ IV treatments
- ◯ Pill treatments
- ◯ Both IV and pills

Chemotherapy start date .....

Planned number of treatments.....

Planned frequency of treatments.....

Location of treatments.....

Specific chemotherapy drugs.....

.....

Use calendar section starting on page 32 to mark specific treatment dates.

My treatment plan continued

My 2nd chemotherapy treatment plan:

- ◯ IV treatments
- ◯ Pill treatments
- ◯ Both IV and pills

Chemotherapy start date .....

Planned number of treatments.....

Planned frequency of treatments.....

Location of treatments.....

Specific chemotherapy drugs.....

.....

My 3rd chemotherapy treatment plan:

- ◯ IV treatments
- ◯ Pill treatments
- ◯ Both IV and pills

Chemotherapy start date .....

Planned number of treatments.....

Planned frequency of treatments.....

Location of treatments.....

Specific chemotherapy drugs.....

.....

Immunotherpy

When I received immunotherapy treatments

- ◯ As my 1st and only planned treatment
- ◯ After my surgery to attack any remaining cancer cells
- ◯ Along with radiation therapy
- ◯ Along with chemotherapy
- ◯ Other: .....

My immunotherapy treatment plan:

Specific immunotherapy drugs.....

.....

Method of treatment .....

Treatment start date (or only date for single treatment.....

Planned frequency of treatments.....

Location of treatments.....

Use calendar section starting on page 32 to mark specific treatment dates.

My treatment plan continued

Hormone therapy

When I received my hormone treatments

- ◯ As my 1st and only planned treatment
- ◯ After my surgery, radiation therapy or chemotherapy
- ◯ As a long term treatment to help prevent a recurrence of my cancer
- ◯ Other: .....

My hormone treatment plan:

- ◯ Injection treatments
- ◯ Pill treatments

Hormone therapy start date.....

Planned number of treatments.....

Planned frequency of treatments.....

Location of treatments.....

Specific hormone controlling drug.....

.....

Use calendar section starting on page 32 to mark specific treatment dates.

Stem cell transplant

When I received my stem cell transplant

- ◯ As my 1st and only planned treatment
- ◯ After other treatments
- ◯ Other: .....

A stem cell transplant usually requires months of preparation as an outpatient, followed by a hospital stay for the main treatment. Since there are many personal details involved in this major treatment, you will need to plan the progress of your care in close connection with your care providers.

Notes

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Did you know?

Pain management

If you have concerns about pain or other symptoms related to your cancer or your treatments, or have questions about palliative care, speak to your doctor. Your doctor may involve another team to help address these concerns, if necessary.

My medical history

My allergies

List drugs, food, other allergies and your reaction (e.g. rash, fever, hives, swelling):

Start date	Allergy	Reaction

My current health issues or chronic conditions:

- ◯ Arthritis
- ◯ Asthma
- ◯ Depression
- ◯ Diabetes
- ◯ Heart disease
- ◯ High blood pressure
- ◯ Kidney disease
- ◯ Liver disease
- ◯ Migraines
- ◯ Seizures
- ◯ Stroke
- ◯ Other .....

Notes

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My treatment medications

Your cancer doctor may prescribe medications for treatment or side effects. Keep track of all prescriptions here. Make copies of this page as needed.

Name of medicine	Doctor who prescribed it	Start date	How much to take	How often	For how many days

Notes

My side effect medications

Name of medicine	Doctor who prescribed it	Start date	How much to take	How often	For how many days

Notes

My non-prescription medications

My vitamins, herbal medicines, and other treatments

My side effects record

Cycle #..... of ..... (Day 1 is the 1st day of chemo)

Make copies as needed for each cycle of treatment.

Day of cycle	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
Nausea														
Vomiting														
Diet														
Feel tired														
Mouth sores														
Diarrhea														
Constipation														
Fever														
Anxiety														
Coping														
Pain														
Skin changes														
..... OTHER														

While undergoing treatment, your care team may ask you to write down the symptoms you have each day using the key on the right hand side. Some of the common side effects patients experience are below. You may have some or none of these side effects, or you may have others not listed here. However, this tool can help you remember the symptoms you would like to discuss with your care team. **The numbers with stars mean you should contact your care centre.**

15	16	17	18	19	20	21	
							0 – no change 1 – eat / drink reasonable amounts *2 – 50% or less than normal fluid intake but can eat *3 – cannot eat / drink
							0 – no vomiting 1 – vomited once in 24 hours *2 – vomited 2 – 5 times in 24 hours *3 – vomited 6 – 10 times in 24 hours *4 – vomited more than 10 times in 24 hours
							0 – regular diet 1 – soft diet *2 – liquids only *3 – no intake
							0 – no change, usual activity 1 – mild, able to continue normal activity *2 – change in normal activity (bed rest less than 50% waking hours) *3 – in bed / chair more than 50% waking hours *4 – bedridden or unable to care for oneself
							0 – none 1 – painless ulcers, mild redness *2 – painful, red, swollen / ulcers – can eat or drink *3 – painful, red, swollen / ulcers – cannot eat / drink
							0 – none 1 – increase of 2 – 3 bowel movements / day *2 – increase of 4 – 6 bowel movements / day or stools during the night *3 – increase of 7 – 9 bowel movements / day *4 – 10 or more bowel movements / day
							0 – none 1 – no bowel movements in 2 days *2 – no bowel movements in 3 days *3 – no bowel movements in 4 days
							0 – normal temperature (37.0 C or 98.6 F) 1 – temperature 37.1 – 37.9 C or 98.7 – 100.3 F *2 – temperature 38.0 – 40.0 C or 100.4 – 104.0 F *3 – temperature greater than 40.0 C or 104.0 F
							0 1 2 3 4 5 *6 *7 *8 *9 *10 no anxiety severe anxiety
							0 1 2 3 4 5 *6 *7 *8 *9 *10 no trouble trouble coping
							0 1 2 3 *4 *5 *6 *7 *8 *9 *10 no pain severe pain
							0 – none 1 – skin changes (redness / cracking) *2 – skin changes with pain but normal function *3 – skin changes with pain and interferes with function
							0 1 2 3 4 5 *6 *7 *8 *9 *10 mild severe

My questions

Write down questions you want to ask your doctor or nurse. Bring your list to each appointment. Use the table to write down the answers.

Date	Question	Answer

Date	Question	Answer

My blood counts

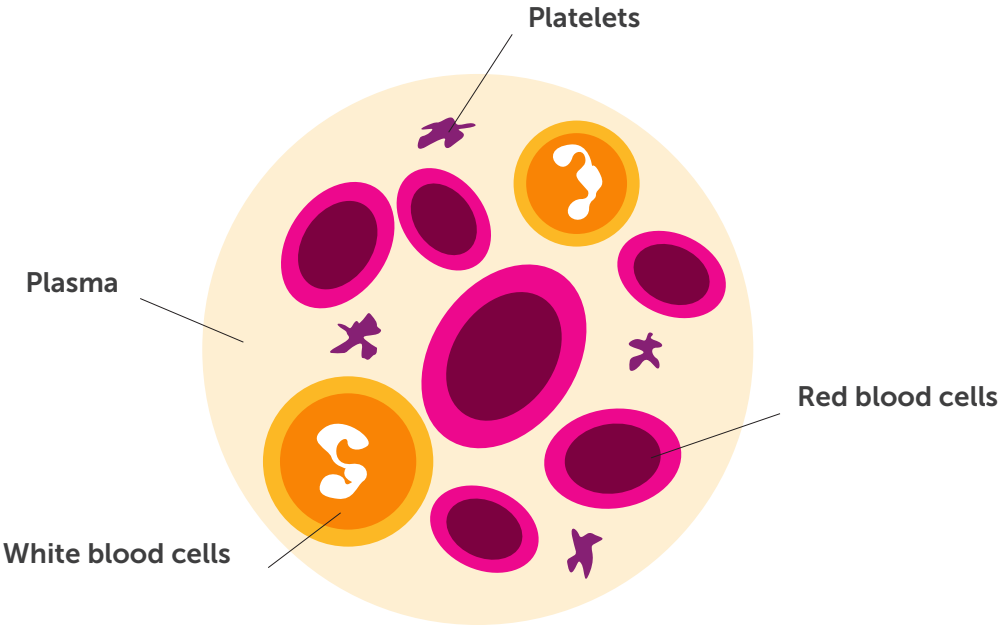
Cancer and cancer treatments can affect the cells in your blood. Your doctor may do a full or complete blood count (CBC) to check the blood cells in your body.

Your blood contains three kinds of cells:

- Red blood cells, which contain hemoglobin that carries oxygen through your body
- White blood cells, which fight infection and disease
- Platelets, which help your blood to clot

Also of interest in your complete blood count is your neutrophil level. A neutrophil is a type of white blood cell that is one of the first cell types to travel to the site of an infection. Decreased neutrophil levels may be a response to various medications, including chemotherapy drugs.

You can request the results of your complete blood test and keep track of them in the chart on pages 26 – 27. For easy reference, three of the most common normal ranges are on the next page. Note that normal values for your blood counts may vary between hospital labs.



White blood cells (WBCs)

White cell count measured in 10^9/L

Note: there may be a difference between the normal white cell count for different ethnic groups.

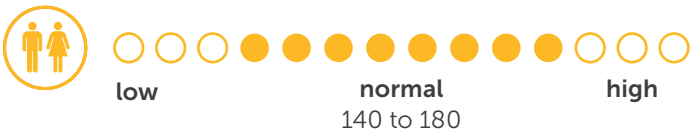
Neutrophils (Gran)

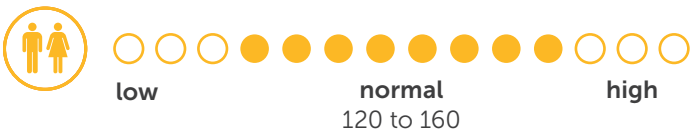
Absolute neutrophil count measured in 10^9/L

Note: A minimum of 1.5 is usually required to continue treatment without a delay. Talk to your doctor about what your count may mean.

Red blood cells / hemoglobin (Hgb)

Hemoglobin (Hgb) measured in g/dL





Platelets

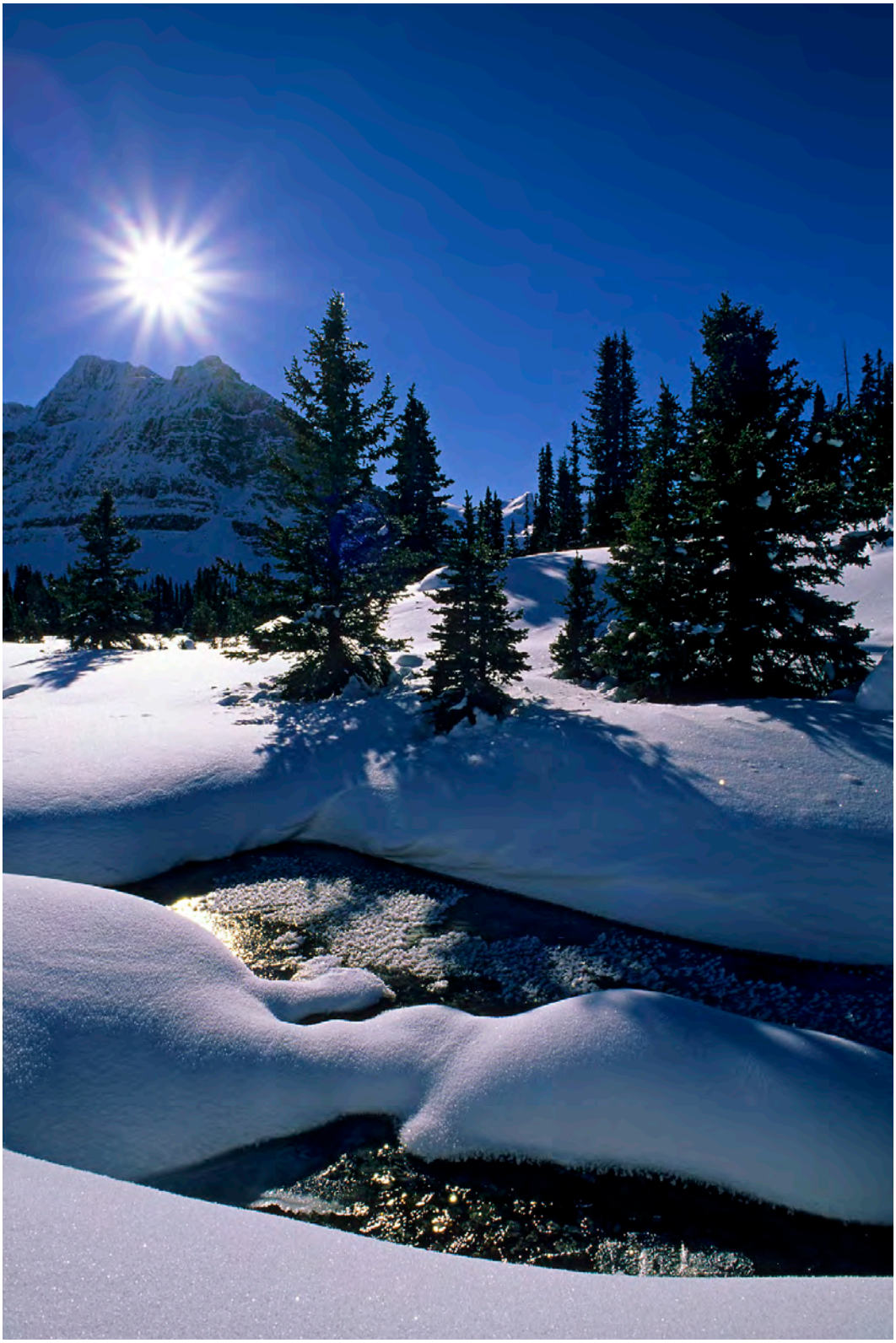
Measured in 10^9/L

Ask your doctor what it means for you if your blood count is higher or lower than normal. Keep track of your blood counts in the charts on the next few pages.

My blood counts continued

Date	Hemoglobin (g/dL)	Platelets (109/L)

White Cells (109/L)	Neutrophils (109/L)	Transfusions (no. of units)



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Notes

Notes

Notes

Don’t count every hour in the day, make every hour in the day count.

Anonymous

Section 2:

My appointments

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

MONTH YEAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday

Thursday	Friday	Saturday

Notes

An obstacle is often
a stepping stone.

Prescott

Section 3:

Sources of help

Cancer centres

There are many sources of help for cancer patients and their families. Check your local cancer centre for resources and contact information.

Tertiary cancer centres

Cross Cancer Institute
11560 University Avenue
Edmonton, Alberta
phone 780.432.8771

Tom Baker Cancer Centre
1331 29 Street NW
Calgary, Alberta
phone 403.521.3723

Associate cancer centres

Central Alberta Cancer Centre
3942 50 Avenue
Red Deer, Alberta
phone 403.343.4526

Grande Prairie Cancer Centre
10409 98 Street
Grande Prairie, Alberta
phone 780.538.7588

Jack Ady Cancer Centre
960 19 Street
Lethbridge, Alberta
phone 403.388.6800

Margery E. Yuill Cancer Centre
666 5 Street SW
Medicine Hat, Alberta
phone 403.529.8817

Community cancer centres

Barrhead Community Cancer Centre
Barrhead Healthcare Centre
4815 51 Avenue
Barrhead, Alberta
phone 780.674.2231

Bonnyville Community Cancer Centre
Bonnyville Health Centre
5001 Lakeshore Drive
Bonnyville, Alberta
phone 780.826.3311 ext 227

Bow Valley Community Cancer Centre
Canmore General Hospital
1100 Hospital Place
Canmore, Alberta
phone 403.678.7226

Camrose Community Cancer Centre
St. Mary's Hospital
4607 53 Street
Camrose, Alberta
phone 780.679.2822

Drayton Valley Community Cancer Centre
Drayton Valley Hospital
and Care Centre
4550 Madsen Avenue
Drayton Valley, Alberta
phone 780.621.4888

Drumheller Community Cancer Centre
Drumheller District
Health Services
351 9 Street NW
Drumheller, Alberta
phone 403.820.7985

Fort McMurray Community Cancer Centre
Northern Lights Regional
Health Centre
7 Hospital Street
Fort McMurray, Alberta
phone 780.791.6217

High River Community Cancer Centre
High River General Hospital
560 9 Avenue West
High River, Alberta
phone 403.652.0139

Hinton Community Cancer Centre
Hinton General Hospital
1280 Switzer Drive
Hinton, Alberta
phone 780.865.3333

Lloydminster Community Cancer Centre
Lloydminster Hospital
3820 43 Avenue
Lloydminster, Saskatchewan
phone 306.820.6144

Peace River Community Cancer Centre
Peace River Community
Health Centre
10915 99 Street
Peace River, Alberta
phone 780.624.7593

Did you know?

You may be able to receive treatment at the community cancer centre closest to your home. Talk to the outpatient departments at your first visit.

If you have questions, contact one of the provincial

Transition Nurses:

Edmonton & Northern Alberta
780.432.8449

Calgary & Southern Alberta
403.521.3657

Clinical trials

Clinical trials allow modern medicine to meet the challenge of finding new, improved treatments.

Approximately 2000 Albertans are participating in more than 200 open clinical trials across the province, spanning all cancer types. Check with your doctor or the websites on the side for options that may be available.

Alberta Cancer Clinical Trials (ACCT), funded by the Alberta Cancer Foundation, provides the infrastructure support to ensure Alberta patients have access to clinical trials. Thanks to this support, Alberta is a North American leader in clinical trials, which means our patients have access to drugs years before they become standard.

ONLINE RESOURCE

To find active cancer trials in Alberta, talk to your doctor or visit this link: **alberta.canadian cancertrials.ca**

To learn more about clinical trials, visit **clinicaltrialsinfo.ca**

New patient information sessions

Information sessions help prepare patients and families for the cancer journey.

Everything from an overview of the facilities, to parking, to what to expect throughout treatment is covered. All new patients are encouraged to attend.

Calgary

Sessions are every Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. and every Thursday at 2:00 p.m.

Tom Baker Cancer Centre Auditorium
Do not need to register
403 476 2445

Edmonton

Sessions are every Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Zane Feldman Auditorium (second floor of the Cross Cancer Institute)
Register in person at the Cancer Information Centre or call 780.432.8456

Nutrition departments

Good nutrition can help you feel better and keep up your energy level during treatment.

Dietitians are available to answer your questions about diet or nutrition.
Check with them for available classes.

Tom Baker Cancer Centre	403.521.3719
Cross Cancer Institute	780.432.8782

My nutrition department contact:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Patient education

The Patient Education Specialists work to make sure you receive the right information, at the right time, and in the right way.

They develop materials and organize educational sessions to help you learn since knowledge is power when you are dealing with cancer. Look for the schedules of events at the Cancer Centres in racks and on bulletin boards. Call the Specialists if you are looking for specific information related to your care.

Calgary & Southern Alberta

Patient Education Specialist	403.476.2445

Edmonton & Northern Alberta

Patient Education Specialist	780.432.8236
Cancer Information Centre	780.432.8456

My patient education specialist:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Cancer patient navigation

A diagnosis of cancer can often be overwhelming for patients and their loved ones.

Cancer patient navigation services are being established across Alberta to assist patients, families and/or their caregivers in a complex health environment. The navigators are nurses who will help you find the services, supports and cancer related information you need in a timely manner. These professional navigators will guide you through the physical, emotional, and financial maze that can happen with a cancer diagnosis, help you make informed decisions, and give you the level of support you and your family need at the time you need it.

Barrhead

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.674.221 ext 2036
Cancer Centre	780.305.3304

Bonnyville

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.812.8018
Cancer Centre	780.826.3311

Bow Valley

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.978.0877
Cancer Centre	780.538.7588

Camrose Primary Care Network
(for Camrose Primary Care Network Physicians and patients)

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.679.2837
Cancer Centre	780.679.2822

Drayton Valley

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.621.8087
Cancer Centre	780.621.4888

Drumheller

Cancer Centre	780.820.6011

Fort McMurray

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.788.1751

Grande Prairie

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.978.0877
Cancer Centre	780.538.7588

High River

Cancer Patient Navigator	403.652.0131
Cancer Centre	403.652.0139

Hinton

Cancer Centre	780.865.3333

Lethbridge

Cancer Patient Navigator	403.388.6840
Cancer Centre	780.538.7588

Lloydminster

Cancer Patient Navigator	587.217.3954
Cancer Centre	306.820.6144

Medicine Hat

Cancer Patient Navigator	403.529.8817 ext 1022

Peace River

Cancer Patient Navigator	780.624.7593
Cancer Centre	780.624.7593

Red Deer

Cancer Patient Navigator	403.406.5524

My cancer patient navigator:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Care concerns

Alberta Health Services is committed to quality improvement and takes patient concerns very seriously.

If you have a concern about services received, there are a number of ways you can tell Alberta Health Services staff. Alberta has legislation in place that upholds a patient's right to express their concerns with health services. That legislation requires Alberta Health Services to appoint a Patient Concerns Officer, who can be contacted at any time during a concern resolution.

Your options:

1 You can talk to your local health-care provider directly about the concern. Involve the program manager or supervisor to help reach a resolution, if necessary.

2 You can contact the Patient Relations Department by phone.

Edmonton & Northern Alberta	1.877.753.2170
Calgary & Southern Alberta	1.877.957.9771

3 You can contact the Patient Concerns Officer at 1.866.561.7578.

My patient concerns officer:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Committed to help

Staff are committed to working with you to resolve the concern as soon as possible.

Visit **albertahealthservices.ca/patientfeedback.asp** for more information.

Rehabilitation

Enjoyment and quality of life is largely tied to a person's ability to do the things they want to be able to do.

A team of rehabilitation specialists is available to help you manage everyday tasks. Physiotherapists, occupational therapists, and speech-language pathologists are health-care professionals well versed in working with you to make the most of your functional abilities.

Speech-language pathology

For people with cancer, problems with swallowing and speaking can be common. If you are experiencing these problems, speech-language pathologists can help you improve these important functions or provide you with strategies to manage them.

Calgary & Southern Alberta	403.476.2448
Edmonton & Northern Alberta	780.432.8288

My speech-language pathologist:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Frequently asked question

I spend a lot of time resting on the couch, why do I still feel tired?

Cancer-related fatigue is common. Restorative sleep is important, but spending too much time resting will make you weak. Try adapting daily tasks to conserve energy, like sitting versus standing to prepare meals. Build up your energy by

- Strengthening your body through exercise
- Choose activities and people that bring you joy – this is energizing
- Discuss your fatigue with your rehab team. A fatigue nurse may also be able to help.

Calgary	403.521.3657
Edmonton	780.432.8223

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapists assist patients recovering from physical problems that may result from cancer. Depending on your need and goals, you may receive physiotherapy to make you stronger and improve your ability to move, or to decrease swelling or pain. If you struggle with physical tasks such as walking, climbing stairs, lifting your arms, turning your head, or have physical symptoms such as pain or swelling, contact a physiotherapist.

Calgary & Southern Alberta 403.476.2448

Edmonton & Northern Alberta 780.432.8716

My physiotherapist:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Occupational therapy

Cancer and cancer treatment can disrupt people's lifestyle. Occupational therapists can help you develop new skills and provide specialized equipment and devices to assist in every day tasks. Depending on your personal goals and abilities, this may include working towards independence in self-care, adapting hobbies or leisure activity for your enjoyment, or providing strategies to manage your plan to return to work.

Calgary & Southern Alberta 403.476.2448

Edmonton & Northern Alberta 780.432.8798

My occupational therapist:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Psychosocial support

Calgary 403.355.3207

The Department of Psychosocial Resources, through a team of trained professionals in psychiatry, psychology and social work, help patients and their families cope with the emotional, psychological and social stresses that often surface as a result of cancer and its treatment. The team is available to patients and families from the moment of diagnosis onward.

Services include but are not limited to the following:

- Individual, couple and family counselling
- Resource counselling
- Practical help including finances, accommodation, transportation and insurance
- Group programs such as Kids Can Cope, breast cancer, lung cancer, GI, ovarian cancer
- Classes such as meditation, stress management, financial courses and sleep programs

For additional information, contact the department at 403 355 3207 or visit the website at **psychosocial.ca**

Edmonton 780.643.4303

The Department of Psychosocial and Spiritual Resources team of professional psychologists, pastoral counsellors and social workers assist patients and families with numerous services including:

- Individual counselling
- Group support
- Arts in medicine programs
- Basic needs such as finance and accommodation

Services are available to patients and families from the moment of diagnosis onward. The department is located in Westmount Mall and can be reached at 780 643 4303.

Associate Cancer Centres

Cancer patients and their families can access resource and supportive counselling at Alberta's Associate Cancer Centres: Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Red Deer and Grande Prairie.

Services offered include:

- Counselling to assist with the anxiety and stress associated with a cancer diagnosis, recurrence, survivorship, palliation and bereavement
- Needs assessment, education and information on available community resources
- Financial support
- Resources and support on hair loss
- Referrals to other agencies and support services

Contact the centre in your area:

Grande Prairie Cancer Centre	780.228.6821
Jack Ady Cancer Centre (Lethbridge)	403.388.6814
Margery E. Yuill Cancer Centre (Medicine Hat)	403.502.8601
Central Alberta Cancer Centre (Red Deer)	403.343.4485

My psychosocial support:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Spiritual care and counselling services

Spirituality may take the form of a longstanding commitment to a specific faith or it may reflect an individual connection with elements of life that bring you meaning and purpose.

Spiritual Care enables individuals and family members living with cancer an opportunity to explore, reconnect and strengthen their spiritual health and sense of wellbeing.

Spiritual counselling is available to individuals and family members.

Calgary & Southern Alberta
Spiritual Care & Counselling Services 403.521.3352

Edmonton & Northern Alberta
Department of Psychosocial and Spiritual Resources 780.432.8545

My spiritual counsellor:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Notes

Quitting smoking

QuitCore is a free group support program that teaches you how to quit smoking.

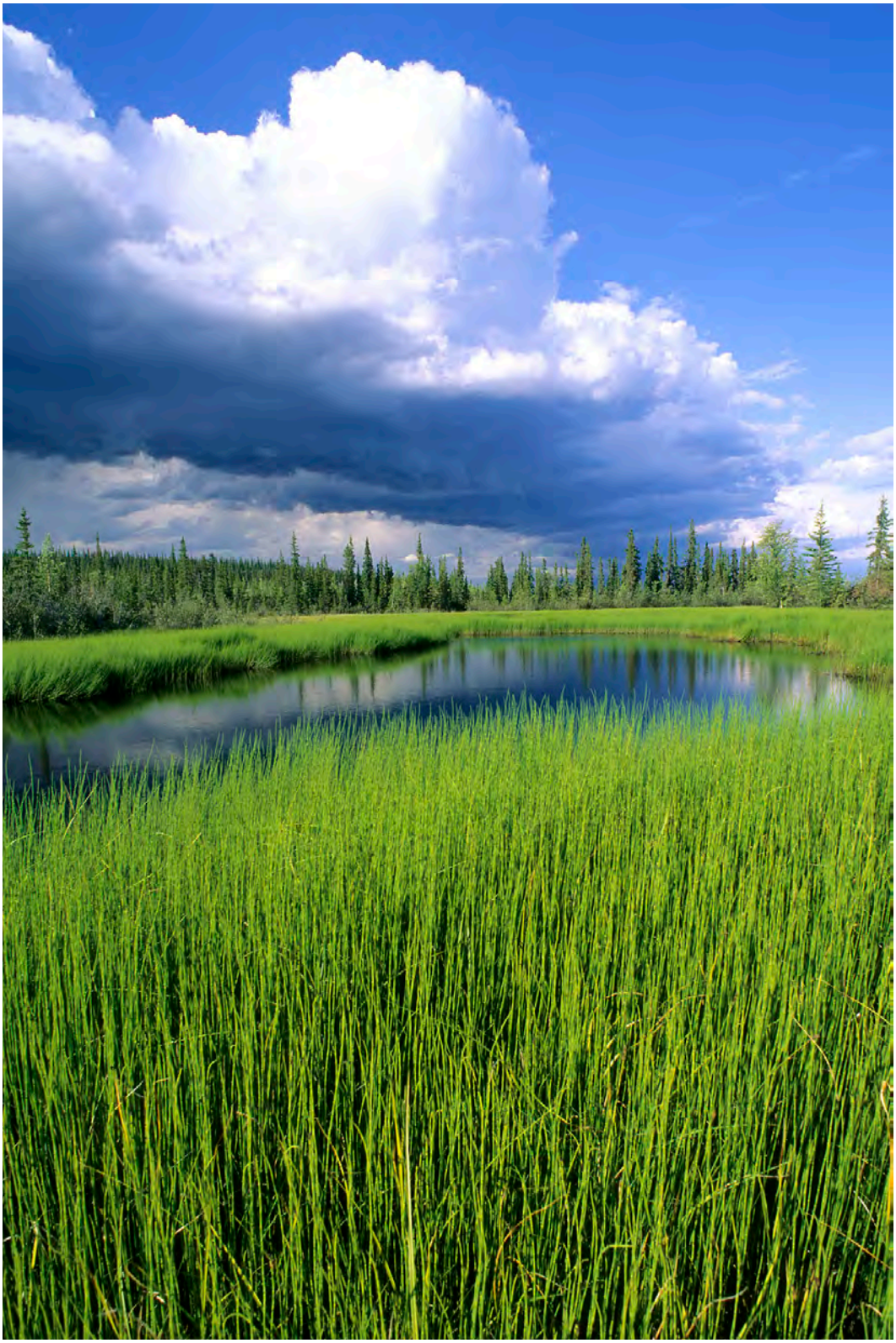
You will learn:

- Quitting support techniques and aids
- How to develop a quit plan that will work for you
- Strategies to deal with recovery symptoms
- How to involve family and friends
- Tips on stress management, healthy eating, and physical activity
- How to prevent a relapse

Begin your smoke-free life:

- 20 minutes after your last cigarette, your blood pressure drops to normal
- 24 hours later, your chance of a heart attack decreases
- In two weeks to three months, your circulation improves and lung function increases by up to 30%
- In one to nine months, you cough less, breathe better and have more energy
- Five years later, your risk of stroke decreases to that of someone who has never smoked. Your risk of lung cancer decreases by 50 per cent

Call toll free 1.866.710.QUIT (7848) to join the upcoming group in your area.



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Notes

Notes

Notes

Express yourself and your emotions creatively.

Karen Bayus (donor)

Section 4:

Managing my health during treatment

Coping and adjusting

You and your family can find help adjusting to your diagnosis and treatment through services at your local cancer centre. Check page 68 for contact numbers and supportive care resources.

As an important part of cancer care, counselling is available for cancer patients and family members. Counselling can help deal with the concerns related to cancer and its treatment. This can include communication within the family, stress, coping with treatment side effects, mood changes, quality of life, body image, and loneliness.

There is also support for practical concerns including discharge planning, finance, personal affairs, transportation, patient / visitor accommodation, long-term placement, and other non-medical concerns.

Respecting individual diversity, spiritual counselling is also available, enabling patients and families to explore their beliefs, values and emotions. Spirituality is that part in each of us which seeks to find meaning and purpose in our lives. Spiritual counselling is available by appointment.

Distress levels

It is normal for patients and families to be upset or anxious during their cancer journey. You may find any number of things cause distress, including emotional, social, informational, spiritual, practical, and/or physical concerns. However, identifying what causes your distress and understanding if and when to get help may be harder than you expected.

Alberta Cancer Foundation donors have enabled a province-wide Screening for Distress program to help navigate through psychosocial, practical and physical concerns throughout your cancer journey. If you haven't already gone through this process, contact your care team for more information.

Check all of the following items that have been a concern or problem for you.
Repeat the exercise at the various stages throughout your treatment.

Emotional:	**Beginning of treatment**	**Check-in #1**	**Check-in #2**	**Treatment almost finished**
Fears / worries	○	○	○	○
Sadness	○	○	○	○
Frustration / anger	○	○	○	○
Changes in appearance	○	○	○	○
Intimacy / sexuality	○	○	○	○
Change in who I am	○	○	○	○
Practical:				
Work / school	○	○	○	○
Finances	○	○	○	○
Getting to and from appointments	○	○	○	○
Accommodation	○	○	○	○
Quitting smoking	○	○	○	○
Informational:				
Understanding my illness and/or treatment	○	○	○	○
Talking with the health-care team	○	○	○	○
Making treatment decisions	○	○	○	○
Knowing about available resources	○	○	○	○
Taking medications as prescribed	○	○	○	○
Spiritual:				
Meaning / purpose of life	○	○	○	○
Faith	○	○	○	○
Social / family:				
Feeling a burden to others	○	○	○	○
Worry about family / friends	○	○	○	○
Feeling alone	○	○	○	○
Physical:				
Concentration / memory	○	○	○	○
Sleep	○	○	○	○
Weight	○	○	○	○

Coping and adjusting continued

Use these pages of your journal for quick access to your resources – supportive care, group support, and other contacts.

My supportive care services:

Notes

NAME

TITLE

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

NAME

TITLE

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

My group support contacts:

Notes

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

Coping and adjusting continued

Other people I can contact for support:

Notes

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

PHONE

EMAIL

DATE

NAME

RELATIONSHIP

PHONE

EMAIL

Notes

Did you know?

If you have critical concerns about expenses during your cancer treatment, speak with your social worker. The Alberta Cancer Foundation Patient Financial Assistance Program may help.

In 2012/13, this program was used 3,348 times for patients in urgent need.

Nutrition

Good nutrition can help you feel better and keep up your energy level during treatment.

Problems such as a poor appetite, weight loss, nausea, taste changes and trouble swallowing are common during treatment. The goal of nutrition is to maintain weight and strength.

Treatment and recovery

Focus on high-calorie, high-protein foods such as:

- pasta with meat or cream sauce
- stews and chili
- lentil and cream soups
- yogurt and pudding
- cheese and nut butters

ONLINE RESOURCE

Canada's Food Guide:
healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide

It is often easier to have smaller meals and snacks more often (every 2 – 3 hours), rather than two or three large meals a day.

Nutritional supplements such as Boost Plus® or Ensure Plus® can be used on their own or in smoothies and milkshakes to increase your nutrition.

Make sure to drink enough fluids. Most people need two to three litres a day. This includes:

- water
- juice
- ginger ale
- herbal teas
- sports drinks
- milk
- hot chocolate
- popsicles
- soup
- and others

Special diets may make it hard to eat all of the right foods. If you have questions about your diet or nutrition during your cancer treatment speak with your cancer centre dietitian or go to a nutrition class to learn more.

My height and weight

Keep track of your height and weight throughout treatment to help understand your nutritional needs and goals.

	Beginning of treatment	Check-in #1	Check-in #2	Treatment almost finished
Height				
Weight				

My food record

Understanding if you are getting enough of the nutrition you need can be tricky. Keeping a food journal can help you understand and keep track of what you consume in a day. This can be helpful for you and your care team now and in the future.

How to use this tool:

- Write down everything you eat and drink for two days. Record one weekday and one Saturday or Sunday.
- Include the portion size, how the food was prepared and any added condiments such as sugar, cream, margarine, sauces and dressings.
- Use additional paper if necessary.

Here is an example:

Time	Food / drink & description	Amount eaten	Comments
7:30 am	2% milk and oatmeal (Quick Oats) with brown sugar	1 cup milk 3/4 cup oats 1 tbsp. sugar	breakfast at home
10:45am	banana	1 medium	snack on the go

Continue throughout the day.

Nutrition continued

My food record

Date ..... Day of week .....

Time	Food / drink & description	Amount eaten	Comments

CHECKLIST

Today I:

- ◯ Ate frequently
- ◯ Enjoyed high protein foods
- ◯ Drank 2 – 3 litres of fluids

Date ..... Day of week .....

Time	Food / drink & description	Amount eaten	Comments

CHECKLIST

Today I:

- ◯ Ate frequently
- ◯ Enjoyed high protein foods
- ◯ Drank 2 – 3 litres of fluids

Nutrition continued

My food record

Date ..... Day of week .....

Time	Food / drink & description	Amount eaten	Comments

CHECKLIST

Today I:

- ◯ Ate frequently
- ◯ Enjoyed high protein foods
- ◯ Drank 2 – 3 litres of fluids

Date ..... Day of week .....

Time	Food / drink & description	Amount eaten	Comments

CHECKLIST

Today I:

- ◯ Ate frequently
- ◯ Enjoyed high protein foods
- ◯ Drank 2 – 3 litres of fluids

Physical activity

Exercise improves your overall health and can help cancer patients, even during treatment.

Dr. Kerry Courneya, a professor and Canada Research Chair in Physical Activity and Cancer at the University of Alberta, has found that exercise can help people receiving chemotherapy be more physically fit, reach or stay at a healthy weight and feel better about themselves.

Activities such as walking, stretching and weight training decrease some side-effects of cancer treatment, like fatigue, constipation, and nausea.

Most oncologists now encourage physical activity both during and after treatment, thanks in part to research conducted by Calgary-based epidemiologist Dr. Christine Friedenreich, whose work focuses on the role of physical activity in cancer prevention, rehabilitation and survival.

Check with your doctor for your individual physical activity recommendations during treatment.

Any type of physical activity counts

Be active throughout the day whenever you can:

- Park further away from work or the mall
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator
- Ride your bike to the video store
- Stretch throughout the day to increase flexibility

Exercise improves your overall health

- Improves how well your heart works
- Improves muscle strength, which improves balance
- Helps control blood pressure
- Helps keep your bones and joints healthy
- Improves flexibility

Exercise helps you relieve stress

Research has found that regular exercise actually reduces stress and anxiety, along with helping you get your mind off your cancer.

Exercise improves your energy level

Exercise can decrease symptoms of tiredness and give you more energy. Exercise helps your red blood cells, cells that carry oxygen through your body, work better. When you exercise, you are increasing the ability of the body to use oxygen in the blood. This helps your body use oxygen more effectively, and helps you feel more energized.

Exercise helps improve your immune system

Recent research has shown that physical activity can improve survival after breast and colon cancers. This includes the research that has been done by Drs Friedenreich and Courneya. Initial findings suggest that exercise can improve the immune system.

Exercise helps you feel good about yourself

Dr. Courneya and Dr. John Mackey from the University of Alberta have studied the effects of exercise on breast cancer patients and reported that those who exercised were happier than those who did not.

Did you know?

Yoga helps improve the treatment-related side effects of cancer, for both the body and the mind. Therapeutic yoga for cancer survivors is offered in Calgary, Canmore, Cochrane, Edmonton, Grande Prairie, Jasper, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, St. Albert and Taber.

For more information, visit **www.ucalgary.ca/healthandwellnesslab/programs/yoga-thrive** or in Edmonton call Psychosocial Services at 780 643 4303.

Many additional yoga studios and fitness centres offer similar classes throughout the province. Check with the facilities in your area.

Physical activity continued

The recommended goal

During treatment, your recommended goal for physical activity will depend on your treatment and ability. Start as low as needed in terms of intensity (e.g. slow walking) and duration (even 5 – 10 minutes) and then build up gradually.

Adding any type of exercise, like brisk walking, will give you health benefits. Begin by identifying the types of activity you enjoy. If you don't have a favourite exercise, start with walking.

Setting "SMART" goals

Research has shown that setting goals will help you start and stay with a new exercise program. Setting goals will also help you monitor progress. Use the "SMART" guidelines when setting goals and remember during treatment to start slow and build up gradually.

S – Specific: decide exactly what you are going to do and how

M – Measurable: measure your progress

A – Attainable: set a goal that is within your reach

R – Realistic: set a goal that is realistic, relevant, and rewarding

T – Time Frame: set a time frame and give yourself enough time to reach your goal

Check with your doctor before beginning a new exercise program. Use the chart to set your own exercise goals and create your exercise schedule.

Reward yourself

Remember to reward yourself when you have reached a goal. Treat yourself to something you enjoy, like taking a long bath, getting to that book you've been wanting to read, or buying a new pair of runners.

My goal

Use the chart to set your own exercise goals and create your exercise schedule.

Week 1	Starting on ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 2	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 3	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 4	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.

Physical activity continued

My goal

Week 5	Starting on ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 6	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 7	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 8	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.

Week 9	Starting on ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 10	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.

Contacts related to my workouts:

.....

NAME PHONE

.....

EMAIL

.....

NAME PHONE

.....

EMAIL

.....

NAME PHONE

.....

EMAIL

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Notes

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Notes

Ninety-nine per cent of things you worry about don't happen; the other one percent you can't do anything about, so why worry at all?

Lois Hole

Section 5:

Managing my health after treatment

Adjusting after treatment

The end of cancer treatment is a time of transition.

You may feel excited and relieved that treatment is over, but you might also be worried about the cancer coming back, unsure about the future, and wonder what is next.

People who have faced cancer often tell us life does not return to the normal they knew before cancer, but to a "new normal," which takes some time to figure out.

Here are some suggestions to help you through this time:

- The Supportive Care services you had through your cancer centre during treatment are still available to you after treatment. See page 68 for a list of numbers. Also, keep talking about your concerns, feelings, worries and future with those you love.
- Keep in touch with other patients you have met. You are experiencing similar things and they may understand how you are feeling.
- Stay in touch with your support group. Even years after treatment it helps to stay in touch with those you met through this experience – see how others are coping and what life changes they may have made.
- Continue writing in your journal, if you have one, or start one if you haven't already. Writing can be very therapeutic.

My contacts to help through this transition:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

Nutrition after treatment

Research shows that some cancers can be prevented by staying at a healthy weight.

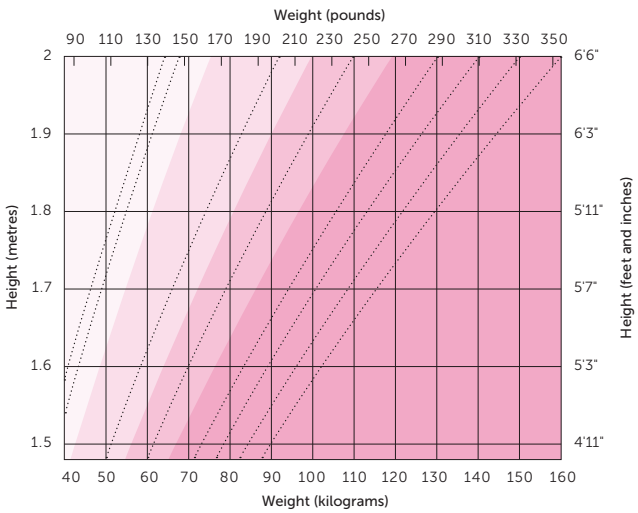
Once you have recovered, talk to your doctor or community dietitian about what a healthy weight is for you.

Eating more fruits and vegetables can also improve your health and reduce your risk of disease. Try to eat at least five servings a day. Try putting ½ cup of berries on your cereal, cut up fresh vegetables for your lunch, choose a piece of fruit as a snack, or serve two different vegetables at dinner.

Weight

Staying at a healthy body weight can help prevent and control many diseases. There is also evidence that it may help lower your risk of cancer. It also helps you feel good about yourself and gives you more energy.

Body Mass Index is a measure of healthy body weight based on a person's height and weight. Because it is easy to use, it is the most widely used tool to identify weight issues. Calculate your own BMI based on the chart below.



My BMI:

WEIGHT .....

HEIGHT .....

BMI .....

- Underweight: BMI <18.5
- Normal: BMI 18.5 – 25
- Overweight: BMI 25 – 30
- Obese: BMI >30

Alcohol

Research suggests there may be a connection between alcohol and cancer.

Experts recommend you limit your alcohol intake to half a drink per day, or less than three drinks per week, especially if you are overweight. A drink is defined as 5 oz of wine, 12 oz beer, or 1.5 oz of hard alcohol.

Physical activity after treatment

Physical activity is encouraged for anyone who has had cancer. In fact, research suggests physical activity may play a role in preventing it from coming back. Exercise also improves your overall health.

Review thte introduction to physical activity in Section 4 of this journal for some background from our own researchers in Alberta. Following active treatment, your level of activity should increase as you get your energy and strength back.

Our experts recommend following the American College of Sports Medicine Guidelines for Cancer Survivors:

- The volume of weekly activity should include:

  150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise

  or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercise

  or an equivalent combination (e.g., 50 minutes of moderate + 50 minutes of vigorous), spread over at least three days a week.

- Two to three weekly sessions of strength training that includes exercises for major muscle groups.

- Stretch major muscle groups and tendons each time you exercise.

The American College of Sports Medicine recognizes that some cancer survivours may be unable to meet the recommendations due to health status. In such a case, the recommendation is to continue to be as physically active as abilities and conditions allow, recognizing that any activity is better than none.

CHECKLIST

Yes, I did:

- ◯ 150 minutes of moderate-intensity exercise this week
- ◯ or 75 minutes of vigorous-intensity exercises this week
- ◯ or a combination of the two

Examples of moderate vs. vigorous activities:

Moderate activities

(I can talk while I do them, but I can't sing.)

- Ballroom and line dancing
- Biking on level ground or with few hills
- Canoeing
- General gardening (raking, trimming shrubs)
- Sports where you catch and throw (baseball, softball, volleyball)
- Tennis (doubles)
- Using your manual wheelchair
- Using hand cyclers – also called ergometers
- Walking briskly (as if you are late for an appointment)
- Water aerobics

Vigorous activities

(I can only say a few words without stopping to catch my breath.)

- Aerobic dance
- Biking faster than 16 km/h
- Fast dancing
- Heavy gardening (digging, hoeing)
- Hiking uphill
- Jumping rope
- Martial arts (such as karate)
- Race walking, jogging, or running
- Sports with a lot of running (basketball, hockey, soccer)
- Swimming fast or swimming laps
- Tennis (singles)

Source: American College of Sports Medicine Roundtable on Exercise Guidelines for Cancer Survivors (1410), **acsm-msse.org**

Physical activity continued

Getting active

Revisit the "SMART" goals on page 92 of this journal and create an exercise schedule that will help keep you on track. Check facilities in your area for activities that are of interest. Anything from dancing to swimming to walking counts, so find something you enjoy and make it part of your everyday routine.

My local gym:

NAME PHONE

WEBSITE

HOURS

My workout partners:

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

NAME PHONE

EMAIL

My goals

Use the chart to set your own activity goals and create your activity schedule.

Week 1	Starting on ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 2	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 3	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.
Week 4	From ..... to ..... I am going to .... for ..... minutes. I am going to do this ..... days a week.

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Notes

Notes

Notes

We push for progress,
accelerated change,
and above all, results.

Alberta Cancer Foundation

Section 6:

Alberta Cancer Foundation

Alberta Cancer Foundation

Every day in Alberta, 43 people hear the words "you have cancer."

The Alberta Cancer Foundation and our donors want to change that. Together, we are focusing our efforts on the things that matter most to Albertans – faster diagnoses, better treatments and improved quality of life.

Focused on these outcomes, and passionate about turning research into insight, the Alberta Cancer Foundation is proud to keep all funds raised within the province, directly benefitting our communities.

We are driven to make an impact in Alberta by pushing for accelerated change, progress, and above all results. We will keep pushing to turn progress into action, to deliver transformational results for Alberta cancer patients and their families.

As Alberta's largest non-government funder of cancer research, we strive to be one of the most innovative philanthropic organizations in Canada. We have invested over $110 million over the past five years in innovative ideas that will redefine the future for Albertans facing cancer.

Through the support of Albertans, we will continue our commitment to make a difference today through research, diagnosis, prevention, screening and care for the 43 Albertans everyday and the 16,000 Albertans who will face this disease this year. Together – we will redefine the future of cancer in Alberta.

Leap magazine

Leap is a quarterly magazine produced by the Alberta Cancer Foundation. It is designed to ensure that as we learn more, you do too.

Why Leap? Because for Albertans with cancer, one step at a time just isn't fast enough. At the Alberta Cancer Foundation, we make just one promise to donors – progress. With your help, we believe we can progress in leaps and bounds.

ONLINE RESOURCE

View Leap online at **myleapmagazine.ca**

Leap

Connect with us online.

Follow us on **Twitter**, join the conversation on **Facebook**, watch videos on **YouTube** and read our blog posts to see the progress we're making at **albertacancer.ca**.

Alberta Cancer FOUNDATION

albertacancer.ca

Join us in making a real and significant difference for albertans

There are many ways to accelerate change.

Donate

- **In-person** – visit the Alberta Cancer Foundation offices at the Cross Cancer Institute or Tom Baker Cancer Centre to donate in person
- **By mail** – mail cheque or money order to:
  Alberta Cancer Foundation Provincial Office
  710 – 10123 99 Street
  Edmonton, AB T5J 3H1
- **Online** – donate via credit card at albertacancer.ca
- **Call** – toll free 1.866.412.4222

Fundraise

- Participate in an event
- Start your own event
- Support an event

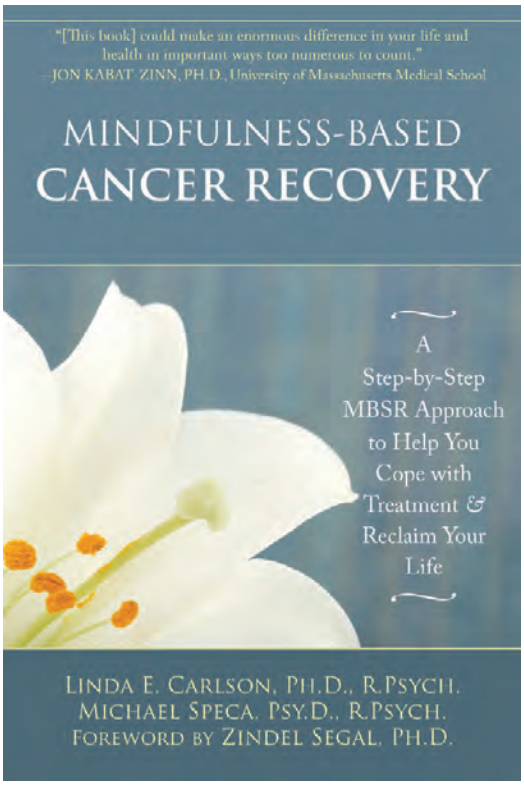
Visit **albertacancer.ca** or phone **1.866.412.4222** to get started.

Volunteer

Volunteers are a vital component to cancer care and fundraising events in our province. Contact your local cancer centre for volunteer opportunities or visit our website at **albertacancer.ca/volunteer.**

Mindfulness-Based Cancer Recovery

Mindfulness-Based Cancer Recovery is an eight-week program grounded in mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) that aims to ease stress, manage the side effects of cancer treatment, increase immune function and ultimately improve overall quality of life through meditation and gentle yoga.



Learn how to:

- **Use proven mindfulness-based skills during your treatment and recovery**
- **Boost your immune function through meditation and healing yoga**
- **Calm feelings of fear, uncertainty, and lack of control**
- **Mindfully manage difficult symptoms and side effects**
- **Discover your own capacity for healing and thriving after adversity**

Co-author Dr. Linda Carlson holds the Enbridge Chair in Psychosocial oncology, established by the Alberta Cancer Foundation in partnership with the Canadian Cancer Society.

Available for borrowing at your local library, purchasing through special order at local bookstores and amazon.ca, or as an ebook pdf download at newharbinger.com.

A cancer-free future
is not just possible,
it is inevitable.

Dr. Michael Hendzel

Section 7:

Glossary

My glossary

Adjuvant therapy
Adjuvant therapy is additional cancer treatment given after the primary treatment to lower the risk that the cancer will come back. Adjuvant therapy may include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, hormone therapy, targeted therapy, or biological therapy.

Cancer
A term for diseases in which abnormal cells divide without control and can invade nearby tissues. Cancer cells can also spread to other parts of the body through the blood and lymph systems. There are several main types of cancer. Carcinoma is a cancer that begins in the skin or in tissues that line or cover internal organs. Sarcoma is a cancer that begins in bone, cartilage, fat, muscle, blood vessels, or other connective or supportive tissue. Leukemia is a cancer that starts in blood-forming tissue such as the bone marrow, and causes large numbers of abnormal blood cells to be produced and enter the blood. Lymphoma and multiple myeloma are cancers that begin in the cells of the immune system. Central nervous system cancers are cancers that begin in the tissues of the brain and spinal cord.

Chemotherapy
Chemotherapy is a drug treatment that uses powerful chemicals to kill fast-growing cells in your body. Chemotherapy is most often used to treat cancer, since cancer cells grow and multiply much more quickly than most cells in the body.

Clinical trials
Clinical trials allow modern medicine to meet the challenge of finding new, improved treatments. Clinical trials mean our patients have access to drugs years before they become standard and that we can find out what works and doesn't work, not only for the patients in the trials but for the next generation of people diagnosed with cancer.

CT scan
A computed tomography scan (CT scan) is a standard way of assessing many parts of the body. It creates a series of detailed pictures of areas inside the body taken from different angles. The pictures are created by a computer linked to an X-ray machine.

ECG
An electrocardiogram (ECG) is a routine recording of the electrical activity of the heart. It is often done as a baseline assessment before treatment begins.

Hemoglobin
The hemoglobin is the red pigment that carries oxygen throughout the body. If the hemoglobin is low (anemia) you may feel tired or short of breath.

Hormone Therapy
One of the major modalities of medical treatment for cancer. It involves the manipulation of the endocrine system through exogenous administration of specific hormones, particularly steroid hormones, or drugs which inhibit the production or activity of such hormones (hormone antagonists).

Linear accelerator
A large machine that precisely delivers high energy X-rays to the tumour area. Many of our Linear Accelerators use image guidance (IGRT) to accurately set up or place the patient for each treatment. Many other types of studies or scans such as MRI, CT and PET are used in the planning process to create an individual radiation treatment plan. The combining of many types of scans to make an individual plan and the use of IGRT is considered a gold standard in radiation treatment, allowing higher doses to the tumour while reducing side effects at the same time.

Lymph nodes
Lymph nodes are the local filtering stations: in most cancers (but not all) they are the first sites for spread. In most cases, whether or not the cancer has spread to the nearby lymph nodes is a major factor in deciding how aggressive it is likely to be.

Metastasis
Metastasis is the spread of cancer from one part of the body to another. A tumour formed by cells that have spread is called a "metastatic tumour" or a "metastasis." The metastatic tumour contains cells that are like those in the original (primary) tumour. The plural form of metastasis is metastases (meh-TAS-tuh-SEEZ).

MRI
Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) is a procedure in which radio waves and a powerful magnet linked to a computer are used to create detailed pictures of areas inside the body. These pictures can show the difference between normal and diseased tissue.

MUGA
A MUGA scan (Multi Gated Acquisition Scan) measures the percentage of blood in the heart that is ejected with each heart-beat. It roughly measures the strength of the heartbeat. A few chemotherapy drugs can weaken the strength of the heartbeat. This test can detect that early. Often a "baseline" MUGA is done to see how strong your heartbeat is before treatment starts.

Neoadjuvant therapy
Neoadjuvant therapy is treatment given as a first step to shrink a tumor before the main treatment, thus making the procedures easier and more likely to succeed. Examples of neoadjuvant therapy include chemotherapy, radiation therapy, and hormone therapy.

Neutrophil
A neutrophil is a type of white blood cell that is one of the first cell types to travel to the site of an infection. Neutrophils help fight infection by ingesting microorganisms and releasing enzymes that kill the microorganisms.

Oncology
Oncology is the study and treatment of cancer. Doctors who specialize in oncology are called oncologists.

Palliative care
Palliative care is given to improve the quality of life for a person whose disease cannot be cured. It provides comfort and support for the patient and family with goals of easing pain, managing other symptoms and clearing the mind.

PET imaging
Positron Emission Tomography (PET) imaging technology is a procedure in which a small amount of radioactive glucose (sugar) is injected into a vein, and a scanner is used to make detailed, computerized pictures of areas inside the body where the glucose is used. Because cancer cells often use more glucose than normal cells, the pictures can be used to find cancer cells in the body. PET imaging can detect smaller tumours than previously possible.

Platelets
The platelets are small components of the blood that are major factors in forming blood clots. Low platelets may make you susceptible to bruises or bleeding.

Prophylactic surgery
Prophylactic surgery is surgery to remove an organ or gland that shows no signs of cancer, in an attempt to prevent development of cancer of that organ or gland. Prophylactic surgery is sometimes chosen by people who know they are at high risk for developing cancer.

Radiation Therapy

Radiation therapy (also called radiotherapy) is the medical use of ionizing radiation to control or kill malignant cells. It may also be used as part of adjuvant therapy to prevent tumor recurrence after surgery to remove primary malignant tumor.

TNM staging system

The TNM system is used for staging most types of cancer. "T" describes the size of the tumour and whether it has invaded nearby tissue. "N" describes whether cancer has spread to nearby lymph nodes, and "M" describes whether cancer has metastasized.

Ultrasound

An ultrasound uses very high frequency sound waves to examine internal organs.

White cells

A type of immune cell. White blood cells help the body fight infections and other diseases. Low white cells may make you particularly susceptible to infection and fever, and may be cause to delay chemotherapy.

Notes

My contacts

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LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We're happy to hear any suggestions you may have for improving our next edition of "My journey."

Email us at acfonline@albertacancer.ca or call toll-free 1.866.412.4222.

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