



[cancer.org](https://www.cancer.org) | 1.800.227.2345

After Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor Treatment

Get information about life as a cancer survivor, next steps, and what you can do to help.

Living as a Cancer Survivor

For many people, cancer treatment often raises questions about next steps as a survivor.

- [Living as a Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor Survivor](#)

Living as a Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumor Survivor

- [Follow-up care](#)
- [Can I lower my risk of the tumor progressing or coming back?](#)
- [Getting emotional support](#)

For some people with a gastrointestinal stromal tumor (GIST), treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. Completing treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but find it hard not to worry about cancer coming back. (When cancer comes back after treatment, it's called a **recurrence**.) This is a very common concern if you've had cancer.

For some people, the GIST may never go away completely. These people may get regular treatments with [targeted therapy drugs](#)¹ or other therapies to help keep the cancer in check and to help relieve symptoms. Learning to live with [cancer that doesn't go away](#)² can be difficult and very stressful. It has its own type of uncertainty.

Follow-up care

Whether you have completed treatment or are still being treated, your doctors will still want to watype of uncertainty.

could happen.

At some point after your treatment, you might find yourself seeing a new doctor who doesn't know about your medical history. It's important to keep copies of your medical records to give your new doctor the details of your diagnosis and treatment. Learn more in [Keeping Copies of Important Medical Records](#)⁹.

Can I lower my risk of the tumor progressing or coming back?

If you have (or have had) a GIST, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the tumor growing or coming back, such as exercising, eating a certain type of diet, or taking nutritional supplements. Unfortunately, it's not yet clear if there are things you can do that will help.

Adopting healthy behaviors such as not smoking, [eating well, getting regular physical activity, and staying at a healthy weight](#)¹⁰ might help, but no one knows for sure. However, we do know that these types of changes can have positive effects on your health that can extend beyond your risk of GIST or other cancers.

About dietary supplements

So far, no dietary supplements (including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products) have been shown to clearly help lower the risk of cancers such as GISTs progressing or coming back. This doesn't mean that no supplements will help, but it's important to know that none have been proven to do so.

[Dietary supplements](#)¹¹ are not regulated like medicines in the United States – they do not have to be proven effective (or even safe) before being sold, although there are limits on what they're allowed to claim they can do. If you're thinking about taking any type of nutritional supplement, talk to your health care team. They can help you decide which ones you can use safely while avoiding those that might be harmful.

If the GIST comes back

If cancer does recur, your treatment options will depend on the location of the cancer, and what treatments you've had before, and your current health and preferences. For more information on how recurrent cancer is treated, see [Typical Treatment Options for Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumors](#)¹². For more general information on dealing with a recurrence, see [Coping With Cancer Recurrence](#)¹³.

Getting emotional support

Some amount of feeling [depressed, anxious, or worried](#)¹⁴ is normal when cancer is a part of your life. Some people are affected more than others. But everyone can benefit from help and [support](#)¹⁵ from other people, whether friends and family, religious groups, [support groups](#)¹⁶, professional counselors, or others.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/gastrointestinal-stromal-tumor/treating/targeted-therapy.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/cancer-as-a-chronic-illness.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests/imaging-tests/imaging-radiology-tests-for-cancer.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/survivorship-care-plans.html
6. www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/tests.html
7. www.cancer.org/cancer/screening.html
8. www.cancer.org/cancer/financial-insurance-matters/understanding-health-insurance.html
9. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/keeping-copies-of-important-medical-records.html
10. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/nutrition-and-physical-activity-during-and-after-cancer-treatment.html
11. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html
12. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/gastrointestinal-stromal-tumor/treating/by-spread.html
13. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence/coping-with-cancer-recurrence.html
14. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes.html
15. www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services.html
16. www.cancer.org/support-programs-and-services/online-communities.html

References

National Cancer Institute. Physician Data Query (PDQ). Gastrointestinal Stromal Tumors Treatment. 2018. Accessed at www.cancer.gov/types/soft-tissue-sarcoma/hp/gist-treatment-pdq on October 21, 2019.

National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN). NCCN Clinical Practice Guidelines in Oncology: Soft Tissue Sarcoma. V.4.2019. Accessed at www.nccn.org/professionals/physician_gls/pdf/sarcoma.pdf on October 21, 2019.

Rock CL, Thomson C, Gansler T, et al. American Cancer Society guideline for diet and physical activity for cancer prevention. *CA: A Cancer Journal for Clinicians*. 2020;70(4). doi:10.3322/caac.21591. Accessed at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.3322/caac.21591> on June 9, 2020.

Last Revised: June 9, 2020

Written by

The American Cancer Society medical and editorial content team
(<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/acs-medical-content-and-news-staff.html>)

Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

American Cancer Society medical information is copyrighted material. For reprint requests, please see our Content Usage Policy (www.cancer.org/about-us/policies/content-usage.html).

cancer.org | 1.800.227.2345