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After Penile Cancer Treatment

Get information about how to live well after penile cancer treatment and make decisions about next steps.

Living as a Cancer Survivor

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

- [Living as a Penile Cancer Survivor](#)

Cancer Concerns After Treatment

Treatment may remove or destroy the cancer, but it's very common to have questions about cancer coming back or treatment no longer working.

- [Long-Term Side Effects of Penile Cancer Treatment](#)

Living as a Penile Cancer Survivor

- [Follow-up care](#)
- [Can I lower my risk of the penile cancer progressing or coming back?](#)
- [Could I get a second cancer after treatment?](#)
- [Getting emotional support](#)

For most people with penile cancer, treatment can remove or destroy the cancer. The end of treatment can be both stressful and exciting. You may be relieved to finish treatment, but it's hard not to worry about cancer coming back. This is very common if you've had cancer.

For some people, the cancer might never go away completely. Some people may get regular treatment with chemotherapy or other treatments to try and help keep the cancer in check. Learning to live with cancer that doesn't go away can be difficult and very stressful.

Life after cancer means returning to some familiar things and also making some new choices.

Follow-up care

If you've completed treatment, your doctors will still want to watch you closely. It's very important to go to all of your follow-up appointments. During these visits, your doctors will ask about any problems you're having and may do exams, lab tests, and/or imaging tests (like CT scans) to look for signs of cancer or treatment side effects. Almost any cancer treatment can have side effects. Some may last for a few weeks to months, but others can last the rest of your life. This is the time for you to talk to your cancer care team about any changes or problems you notice and discuss any questions or concerns you have.

You'll need to still see your cancer doctor for many years. Doctor visits and exams will be more frequent at first, often every 3 to 6 months for the first 2 years, then every 6 to 12 months for 3 to 5 years. The time between visits will get longer over time. The time between visits and the follow-up tests done depend on the stage of the cancer and the type of treatment you had. Ask what kind of follow-up schedule you can expect.

Ask your doctor for a survivorship care plan

Talk with your doctor about developing a [survivorship care plan](#)¹ for you. This plan might include:

- A suggested schedule for follow-up exams and tests

A schedule for other tests you might need in the future, such as [survivorship care plan](#)¹ for you. This plan might include:

- to watch for and when you should contact your doctor
- Diet and physical activity suggestions
 - Reminders to keep your appointments with your primary care provider (PCP), who will monitor your general health care

Keeping health insurance and copies of your medical records

Even after treatment, it's very important to keep health insurance. Tests and doctor visits cost a lot, and even though no one wants to think of their cancer coming back, this could happen.

At some point after your cancer 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 Records³](#).

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

If you have (or have had) penile cancer, you probably want to know if there are things you can do that might lower your risk of the cancer 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.

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 cancer comes back

If the cancer does come back (recur) at some point, your treatment options will depend on where the cancer is, what treatments you've had before, your overall health, and your preferences. For more information on how recurrent cancer is treated, see [Treatment of Penile Cancer, by Stage⁹](#).

- [important-medical-records.html](#)
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/tobacco.html
 5. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/eat-healthy.html
 6. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/get-active.html
 7. www.cancer.org/cancer/risk-prevention/diet-physical-activity/take-control-your-weight.html
 8. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/treatment-types/complementary-and-integrative-medicine/dietary-supplements.html
 9. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/penile-cancer/treating/by-stage.html
 10. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/recurrence.html
 11. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/long-term-health-concerns/second-cancers-in-adults.html
 12. www.cancer.org/cancer/screening.html
 13. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/emotional-mood-changes.html
 14. www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/be-healthy-after-treatment/life-after-cancer.html
 15. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/penile-cancer/references.html

References

[See all references for Penile Cancer](#)

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Long-Term Side Effects of Penile Cancer Treatment

- [Urination](#)
- [Sexuality](#)
- [Lymphedema](#)

Penile cancer and its treatment can sometimes lead to long-term, life-changing side effects. Penile-sparing treatments are used whenever possible to limit these changes, but in some cases they can't be avoided.

Urination

gone, but a man can still reach orgasm and ejaculate normally. His partner should also still be able to enjoy sex and often reach orgasm.

Intercourse is not possible after total penectomy. Some men give up sex after this surgery. Since cancer of the penis is most common in elderly men, some are already unable to have sex because of other health problems. But if a man is willing to put some effort into his sex life, pleasure is possible after total penectomy. He can learn to reach orgasm when sensitive areas such as the scrotum, skin behind the scrotum, and the area around the surgical scars are caressed. Having a sexual fantasy or looking at erotic pictures or stories can also increase excitement.

A man can help his partner reach orgasm by caressing the genitals, by oral sex, or by stimulation with a sexual aid like a vibrator.

After total penectomy, surgical reconstruction of the penis might be possible in some cases. If you're interested in this, ask your doctor if this might be an option for you.

Removing all or part of the penis can also have a devastating effect on a man's self-image. Some men might feel stressed or depressed, or might not feel "whole" after the operation. These are valid and understandable feelings, but they can often be helped with counseling or talking with others. For more information, see [Sex and the Man with Cancer](#)³.

Lymphedema

The [lymph nodes](#)⁴ in the groin and the vessels that connect them help fluid drain out of the groin and lower part of the body and back into the bloodstream. If the groin lymph nodes are removed or treated with radiation, it can sometimes lead to problems with fluid drainage in the legs or scrotum, causing abnormal swelling. This condition is called lymphedema. The chances of it developing vary greatly.

This problem was more common in the past because more lymph nodes were removed to check for cancer spread. Today, fewer lymph nodes are usually removed, which lowers the risk of lymphedema. But lymphedema can still happen, even with less treatment. And it can be a life-long risk. For more on this, see our [Lymphedema](#)⁵ section.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/penile-cancer/treating/topical-therapy.html
2. www.cancer.org/cancer/types/penile-cancer/treating/surgery.html
3. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/fertility-and-sexual-side-effects/sexuality-for-men-with-cancer.html
4. www.cancer.org/cancer/diagnosis-staging/lymph-nodes-and-cancer.html
5. www.cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/swelling/lymphedema.html
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