

# Cancer Survivorship

# Facts

FROM THE DIVISION OF CANCER PREVENTION AND CONTROL

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As the population of cancer survivors continues to grow, the public health community is considering ways to address the issues related to survivorship. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) works with national, state, tribal groups, territories, Pacific Island Jurisdictions, and local partners to create and implement successful strategies to help the millions of people in the United States live with, through, and beyond cancer.

The term “cancer survivors” refers to individuals who have been diagnosed with cancer and the people in their lives who are affected by the diagnosis, including family members, friends, and caregivers.



## The Burden of Cancer Survivorship

Due to advances in the early detection and treatment of cancer, people are living many years after a diagnosis. In January 2004, about 11.1 million people with a previous diagnosis of cancer were living in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 65% of people diagnosed with cancer are expected to live at least 5 years after diagnosis.<sup>1</sup>

However, disparities in health care impact survival. Low-income men and women who have inadequate or no health insurance coverage are more likely to be diagnosed with cancer at later stages, when survival times are shorter.<sup>2</sup>

Cancer survivors may face physical, emotional, social, spiritual, and financial challenges as a result of their cancer diagnosis and treatment. Public health professionals strive to address survivorship and quality of life issues such as the coordination of care, patient-provider communication, palliative care, pain management, and fertility preservation. In light of these concerns, public health initiatives aimed at understanding and preventing secondary disease, recurrence, and the long-term effects of treatment are essential.

## Promoting Health After a Cancer Diagnosis

Cancer survivors are at greater risk for recurrence and for developing second cancers due to the effects of treatment, unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, underlying genetics, or risk factors that contributed to the first cancer.<sup>3</sup> The following factors can help maintain health and improve survival and quality of life after a cancer diagnosis:

- **Quitting Tobacco Use**
  - Smoking is a preventable risk factor for cancer recurrence and additional cancers.<sup>4</sup>
- **Being Active and Maintaining a Healthy Weight**
  - Obesity may be related to poorer survival after breast,<sup>5,6,7</sup> prostate,<sup>8,9</sup> and colorectal cancer.<sup>10</sup>
  - Regular physical activity may improve quality of life after a cancer diagnosis.<sup>11</sup>
- **Discussing Follow-up Care with a Health Care Provider**

**Important topics to discuss:**

  - A follow-up plan of care that includes a schedule of recommended follow-up visits, screenings, and medical tests and specifies which providers will be responsible for care.<sup>12</sup>
  - Possible delayed effects of treatment.<sup>13</sup>
  - The importance of seeking timely care in response to certain signs or symptoms.

- Emotional wellness after cancer and identifying available resources for additional support, if necessary.
- Lifestyle changes recommended for improving health and well-being after cancer.
- Developing an effective support system that meets survivors' medical and emotional needs.<sup>14</sup>

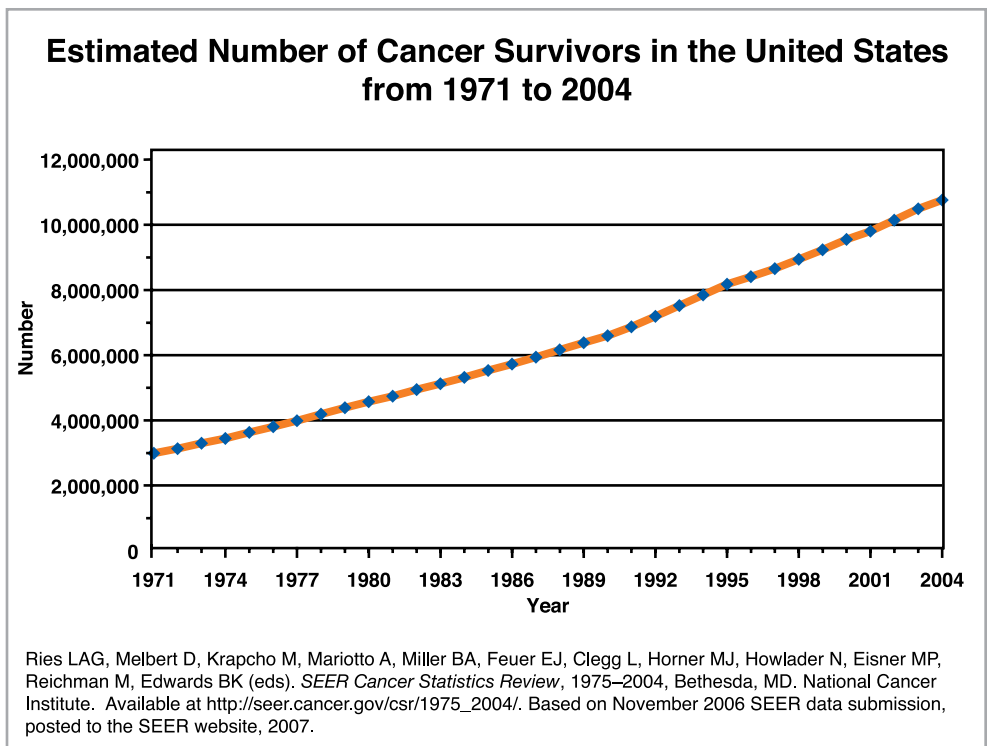
## Accomplishments

In 2004, CDC and the Lance Armstrong Foundation (LAF), along with nearly 100 experts in cancer survivorship and public health, released *A National Action Plan for Cancer Survivorship*:

*Advancing Public Health Strategies (Action Plan)*, available at [www.cdc.gov/cancer/survivorship/what\\_cdc\\_is\\_doing/action\\_plan.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/survivorship/what_cdc_is_doing/action_plan.htm). This collaboration articulated goals, activities, and resources to address the issues facing the growing number of cancer survivors in the United States.

CDC has joined forces with national organizations, states, tribes, territories, and Pacific Island Jurisdictions to address several of the cancer survivorship “priority needs” cited in the Action Plan. This work includes efforts to understand and improve quality of life and end-of-life support for cancer patients, their family, friends, and caregivers, as well as initiatives to increase survivorship in underserved populations.

- CDC has supported organizations and projects such as:
  - The Patient Advocate Foundation, which provides case management to cancer survivors to ensure their finances, employment, and medical treatments are not interrupted by poor or slow insurance reimbursement or employment status.
  - The Emmy® Award-winning Public Broadcasting Service film, *A Lion in the House*, a documentary that raises awareness about the challenges facing child and young-adult cancer survivors.
  - The Lance Armstrong Foundation’s LIVESTRONG SurvivorCare program, as well as education and outreach material for various population groups.
  - The National Marrow Donor Program and the National Coalition of Cancer Survivorship; both



are creating educational resources for hematologic cancer survivors.

- SuperSibs! provides support services to siblings of children with cancer, their families, and educators.
- Providing technical assistance, resources, partnerships, and guidance to Comprehensive Cancer Control programs and coalitions as survivorship-related activities are initiated, including creating survivorship-related cancer plan objectives, statewide survivorship resource guides, and conference support.
- Research conducted by CDC investigators has shown that:
  - Many providers may miss opportunities to counsel survivors about healthy behaviors.<sup>15</sup>
  - Unmet medical care needs are common among survivors because of cost, particularly among those who are uninsured.<sup>16</sup>
  - Various organizations and programs are striving to address the needs of cancer survivors through public health planning, yet challenges exist in understanding and serving survivors.<sup>17,18</sup>
  - The experience of having a potentially life-threatening illness can lead to positive adaptation and increased ability to thrive, despite difficult circumstances.<sup>19</sup>
  - Survivors often have difficulty finding information to address their social and financial concerns after



cancer diagnosis and treatment. Patients desire clear and easy-to-follow information on the long-term implications of treatment and disease.<sup>20</sup>

These and other public health efforts that address cancer survivorship support CDC's overarching goal of healthy people in every stage of life. They also address the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Healthy People 2010 goal of increasing to 70% the proportion of cancer survivors who live 5 years or longer after diagnosis.

## Ongoing Work

CDC's current cancer survivorship activities include:

- Developing cancer survivorship questions for inclusion in population-based national surveys such as the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System ([www.cdc.gov/brfss/](http://www.cdc.gov/brfss/)) and the National Health Interview Survey ([www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nhis.htm)) to assess the burden of cancer survivors and to plan, implement, and evaluate cancer control strategies.
- Studying various aspects of survivorship including:
  - Identifying the barriers to receiving appropriate follow-up care and practicing healthy behaviors after cancer treatment.
  - Evaluating the effectiveness of a nationally available survivorship program on improving quality of life, facilitating decision-making, attitude, and perceived need for information among a disadvantaged population.
  - Characterizing the specialty of physicians who provide care to older cancer survivors.
  - Determining quality of life related to men's choice in prostate cancer treatment.
- Supporting the development and distribution of a broad range of cancer survivorship informational materials through the LIVESTRONG National Cancer

Survivorship Resource Center. Materials for cancer survivors, including their family members, friends, and caregivers, address the physical, emotional, and practical issues that may arise after a cancer diagnosis.

- Funding nine national organizations to develop and share information that will enhance quality of life and knowledge about hematologic cancers for cancer survivors, family, caregivers, and the medical community. Information on hematologic cancer survivorship is available at [www.cdc.gov/cancer/hematologic](http://www.cdc.gov/cancer/hematologic).

## Future Directions

CDC would like to expand its research and programmatic initiatives to meet the emerging challenges of cancer survivorship by:

- Assisting states, tribal groups, territories, and Pacific Island Jurisdictions in their efforts to address cancer survivorship through Comprehensive Cancer Control initiatives.
- Developing ways to evaluate success in improving survivorship.
- Enhancing resources, partnerships, and coordination among national and community organizations that serve survivors, including their family members, caregivers, and health care providers.
- Examining the development and impact of post-treatment care plans for cancer survivors.
- Investigating factors which impact receipt of appropriate follow-up care among cancer survivors.

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