What to Expect During Mesothelioma Remission

by ANGELA FINLAY

Self-Care and Clinical Monitoring Are Crucial During Mesothelioma Remission

Life after mesothelioma treatment is invigorating and gratifying for many survivors, but it can also be challenging. From medical follow-ups to emotional changes and ongoing symptoms, recovery and remission might not bring the lasting relief you had expected. Luckily, your medical team will offer information and guidance, but prepare to draw on other resources, including your own strength, as you begin your life after treatment. Let's learn more about mesothelioma remission.

What to Expect From your Medical Team Following Treatment

Your relationship with your oncologist doesn't end when treatment ends – you'll be checking in periodically for examinations and tests in the months or years to come. Generally, post-treatment visits will be straightforward and non-invasive: blood tests, physical exams, x-rays, CT scans and MRIs are the most popular tools to check for a recurrence of cancer.

If you choose to go back to your family physician after treatment ends, have your oncologist compile a treatment summary for you to take along, which should include:

- Details about your specific type and stage of mesothelioma.
- Date of diagnosis, dates of treatments and types of treatments you received.
- Past diagnostic test results.
- Your risks for developing long-term side effects from the cancer treatment.

The treatment summary is often the first part of a survivorship care plan. This document will also outline a schedule for future tests to evaluate your health in the years to come, along with suggestions for managing ongoing symptoms and new symptoms to watch for.

Dealing with Change and Uncertainty During Mesothelioma Remission

After you finish your mesothelioma treatment, you might feel on top of the world and ready to get back to your normal life. On the other hand, you might find yourself struggling with troublesome feelings and situations that you did not anticipate, such as:

- **Fear of recurrence**. Although finding out you're cancer-free is a great feeling, it can also leave you suspicious and unconvinced about the future. Many patients who have undergone successful treatment can't shake the worry that the cancer might come back and that constant anxiety can begin to interfere with their life. Since mesothelioma can go unnoticed until the late stages, some survivors may fear it will return and progress before their doctor can catch it.
- **Emotional turmoil**. When treatment suddenly stops, you may wonder how to move ahead. You'll no longer have the regular face-to-face support of your medical team, you might have to readjust to your

familial role, and there's a good chance you will feel drained after the emotional rollercoaster of cancer treatment. A warm, reliable support network will be invaluable to your emotional recovery.
- **Learning to live with cancer**. If you've finished your treatment but the mesothelioma was not eradicated, you'll have to learn how to cope with cancer in your day-to-day life. You might find that treatment has affected your memory or personality, your current medications might not allow you to enjoy certain activities, and fatigue can interfere with regular daily tasks. You'll need to find ways to live with your cancer without letting it defeat your spirit.

Your life goes through major changes from diagnosis to treatment and beyond, so work with your doctors, your friends and family, and cancer support groups to voice your feelings and concerns.

Do whatever it takes to remain positive; although it's important to acknowledge that mesothelioma recurrence or progression is a possibility, you must overcome the daily fear associated with that possibility.

Your survivorship care plan and healthy lifestyle changes will help you to stay in control of your health and happiness.