Seven Tips for Living With Mesothelioma

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Living With Mesothelioma

What do you do if you've been given a diagnosis of mesothelioma? You would obtain medical treatment, right? Good, because it may certainly help. But what about other things you could be doing? Have you heard that certain types of lifestyle habits could influence the development of cancer and its progression?

If you're smoking, would you give it up if it gives you another 5 years of life? What about giving up your sweets and processed foods? Are you so stuck in your ways that you won't even try to do this, and potentially gain another 5 years of life? What about your job? If your job was a cause of your mesothelioma, are you willing to give up the job and get another? Do you believe there is hope after your medical treatment?

There is so much to think about!

Making a Plan With Mesothelioma

Creating a living with mesothelioma plan is important. This way you can enjoy what you can do for the rest of your new life.

Below are a few tips that could help you:

Talk to Your Doctor

Do your own research but also talk to your doctor to better understand your condition. The life expectancy depends on several factors including your overall health status, the stage of the cancer (and how much it spread to other organs, and what kind of treatments you have available.

Your health care professional will give you an estimate survival rate at one year (which is currently about 40%) and at five years (which is now around 10%).

What Do Those Numbers Mean?

Those percentages about the survival rate are based on statistics conducted over the years by researchers. That is, they are just numbers to give doctors and you an idea about the prognosis.

Remember that these numbers improved significantly over the last few decades, and every day new research could potentially improve these numbers further. Your body has its own unique way of dealing with cancer, and you can simply be in those 10% that can live longer, beyond your best expectations.

According to scientific literature, many patients had been treated successfully with standard treatments (chemo, surgery, radiation), and some of them even went into remission. If they did it, you can do it, too!

Regular Follow Ups

It is important to let your doctor know any important changes. For example, if you experience new symptoms or you notice that the pain is worsening. Physical symptoms such as fatigue, sleep problems, sexual dysfunctions, weight changes or anything else that can impact the quality of life should be addressed.

If you are planning to take high doses of vitamins, herbs or any other natural supplements, find a doctor specialized in integrative medicine (who has training and understand both conventional and alternative medicine), or ask your alternative doctor to consult your MD.

Have a Diary

Keep your medical records organized. Have a cancer journal where you record how you feel, what you ate, how much you exercised and your appointments on a daily basis. Do you experience any side effects from your drugs? What ameliorates your symptoms? Write down everything.

This way you can stay motivated to stay in control of your health, find possible connections between your symptoms and other factors (e.g., the drugs you take, the diet, etc.). Your doctor may also adjust the treatment based on your notes.

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As mentioned above, your overall health status plays a key role in your survival rate and the quality of life you will have during these years.

Below is a list of the top seven things to do that could increase your life expectancy for various reasons. Examine each one of them and get started today on making a positive change. Even if you could change one habit per week, you are making forward progress.

- **Stop smoking** - Consider getting help with habits that are difficult for you to work on. Smoking is a problem that many have issues with. Consider talking to a doctor or a therapist to stop your habit and tackle it one day at a time.
- **Eat well** - For many people, the treatment for mesothelioma results in a lot of change in their food and dietary habits. Tastes change, even the slightest bit of coarseness in the food can feel horrible in the mouth. There is often a complete transformation of diet. Ensure that you still manage to get a healthy diet plan in place. Even with liquids and juices or more of mashed food, try to fit in a healthy amount of the right food in the right portions.
- **Monitor your weight** - Weight management is important to most people. Sometimes, the chemotherapy and medication may alter your eating habits. Whether you are dealing with excessive weight gain or extremely low weight, you need to buck up and look at an optimal weight range. For many people, this is a time to make a conscious change about their weight concerns and focus on looking as good as they can while living with the cancer.

- **Stop or limit drinking** - Limiting alcohol intake is also a positive lifestyle change to consider. A drink or two is fine to relax after a tiring day. The problem is when alcohol becomes the coping strategy leading to negative consequences. It will interfere with medication and while seriously hamper the quality of life and your well-being. If you are a binge drinker or need help with the habit, talk to a physician, consider a rehabilitation program or group therapy depending on the severity of your drinking problem.
- **Don’t use recreational drugs** - Drug use is a common problem when people want to get away from the pain and moodiness. If you are using drugs to cope with your condition, it will interfere with the treatment plan, and in combination with the medication, can cause life-threatening conditions. Talk to a doctor about your problem and seek help at the earliest to make a change in your lifestyle.
- **Take care of yourself** - Rest, exercise, and enjoying life are important to cope with mesothelioma. Exercise regularly and make sure that you don’t overly exert yourself physically. Talk to your health practitioner about the exercise regimens that are good for you that will not wear you out physically.

- **Get support** - There are support groups where people with the condition work together and discuss common concerns. You can find online support or if you feel lonesome, work with a local support group. Group therapy really helps in making healthier lifestyle choices.

A combination of healthy lifestyle choices with open discussion can help you with making lifestyle choices that will lead to a better prognosis when coping with mesothelioma. Regular physical activity reduces anxiety, a healthy body gives you more energy, and keeps you stress-free. Stronger muscles, fitness plans and right habits will have you enjoying an improved quality of life.