Tips for Living as an Ovarian Cancer Survivor

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Ovarian Cancer Remission: What's Next?

The relief of ovarian cancer remission is almost always tempered by stress, anxiety and paranoia, especially if the cancer was entirely unexpected in the first place.

For those who have battled ovarian cancer, the worry can be particularly heavy, since this type of cancer has a greater tendency to return after surgery and chemotherapy than some other cancers. In turn, survivors must adjust their outlook and lifestyle to cope with the uncertainty while enjoying life in remission.

Facts about Recurring Ovarian Cancer

Ovarian cancer is a notoriously difficult cancer to beat: only around 30 percent of patients achieve full ovarian cancer remission, and of those, up to 50 percent will experience a recurrence within the next three years.

It's impossible to know on which side of the statistic you will fall, but there are a few indicators that impact your chances of suffering from a terminal recurrence:

- **Quick recurrence.** The prognosis will be better the longer a person stays in remission before the cancer resurfaces. If it's been longer than six months since your first-line treatment, the same chemotherapy that sent you into remission may work the second time around, too.
- **Stage of cancer.** More advanced cancers are more difficult to beat, and many cases are actually persistent or refractory cancers rather than recurrent – that is, the cancer was never fully eradicated in the first place.
- **Late detection.** The earlier you can detect the recurrent cancer, the better your chances of starting an effective second-line therapy (or salvage therapy) to control the symptoms and slow the disease progression.

It's important to watch out for symptoms of recurrence, and keep all your follow-up appointments in order to catch it early. As for your daily routine, a healthy focus is the first step to a balanced and happy life.

Staying Happy and Confident after Ovarian Cancer

It's natural to feel a flurry of different emotions. Anger, anxiety, and fear can quickly overwhelm your efforts to live a normal life in remission.

Emotions are very personal, and although you won't find a template to boost your mood and balance your feelings, there are some proven ways to gain control of your psychological health in order to sustain your physical health during ovarian cancer remission:

- **Focus on treatment, not cure**. Recurrent ovarian cancer is rarely cured, but early and thorough

treatment can control the symptoms and slow the disease progression very well. If your first-line treatment is not an option, don't lose hope: there could be many more treatments to consider, and knowing the range of approaches available – and what you can expect from them – will help to ease your anxiety.

- **Use your emotions as motivation.** Many people find that they see things differently after battling cancer, and it prompts them to readjust their priorities. Think about what's making you sad, but also what makes you happy, and leaves you inspired. In a way, living in remission is a blessing in disguise: you can see through the petty distractions to focus on the things that really matter to you, but you're also *able* to do many of those things you've always wanted to do.

Support was important during your cancer treatment, and it will be an important part of your post-cancer life, too.

Family and friends are important resources, but you may also want to consider some professional, targeted supportive figures, like palliative nurses. Many nurses dedicated to controlling cancer symptoms are also trained in counseling, so you can benefit from their emotional and physical support as you settle into your post-cancer life.