

HOPE & HEALING

A guide to helping survivors navigate through their journey

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Fall 2023 Issue

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Call Center: [404.531.4444](tel:404.531.4444)

**NORTHSIDE
HOSPITAL
CANCER INSTITUTE**
"BUILT TO BEAT CANCER"

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Hosts Second Annual Patient and Caregiver Conference

On Saturday, August 12, 2023, the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute hosted its second annual Patient and Caregiver Conference at the Hotel at Avalon in Alpharetta. The conference achieved its goal of educating patients, survivors and caregivers in addition to providing helpful tips for navigating the cancer journey. The program opened with three general sessions for everyone in attendance, then broke for lunch and concluded with three breakout sessions: "Patient and Survivor (All Stages)," "Caregiver" and "Thrivers." During each session, attendees had the opportunity to ask questions and learn more about various topics, including nutrition, genetics and genomics, clinical research and the importance of communication during and after cancer treatment. Several Northside Hospital Cancer Institute providers volunteered as speakers, panelists and moderators, and many more served as event volunteers and hosts for support service information tables. Additionally, 17 community resource organizations were in attendance to provide information, resources and support. Both attendees and speakers provided positive feedback after the conference. We look forward to hosting our third annual Patient and Caregiver Conference in 2024!



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"It was an excellent conference! Please extend my heartfelt appreciation to all who prepared so well to make it a success!"

– Colin (attendee)

"Mary Lee and I thoroughly enjoyed the conference Saturday. We both thought it was done well and the speakers were right on."

– John (attendee)

"Thank you for organizing this conference, it went really smoothly and was very professional. I am hearing patients talking about it in the clinic today, I think it was very successful. Great work! Looking forward to the next conference."

– Dr. Ioana Bonta (moderator)

Please click [here](#) to view presentations from the 2023 conference.

Please click [here](#) to view the Conference Information Booklet.



ASK OUR EXPERT



The Power of “No”: How to Set and Maintain Healthy Boundaries During and After Cancer Treatment

By: X'Cel Cedeno, LPC

The word “no” often sounds mean, disrespectful and selfish. After all, a “Yes Man” is known to be nice, available and compliant. When cancer experts advise patients to “think about themselves and prioritize their own well-being,” patients feel unsure of how to follow the advice. Many feel uncomfortable at the prospect of saying “no” to loved ones and feel that prioritizing their personal needs over others will be perceived as selfish.

Yet, a cancer diagnosis requires one to focus on what can be controlled. Anything else is a waste of energy; energy needed to heal. Cancer can lead to extreme uncertainty and anxiety, and setting healthy boundaries can create a sense of empowerment in a situation where most things feel and are out of one's control.

The following tips may be helpful in expanding the perception of the word “no,” and redefining self-care to aid in recovery.

- Be willing to talk as much or as little as feels appropriate. Let loved ones know which conversations are positive and productive, and which

are not. They can provide better support if they know which conversations are helpful.

- Ask for help. Asking for help, space, normalcy, etc., does not make a person weak or needy; rather, it leads to a strong and confident person who can acknowledge and fulfill personal needs.
- Trust the doctors and providers, but be an active participant in developing the treatment plan. Share primary goals, preferences, beliefs and values with the treatment team.
- Set information intake boundaries. Limit viewing information about the cancer experiences of others. These stories are often very subjective and not usually applicable. Limit information research on the internet. Do not focus on the worst-case scenario, but instead live with joy and optimism.

Patients owe themselves as much happiness and peace as possible. Creating healthy boundaries will help to maintain stability and adapt to a new way of living. To talk more about these techniques with a professional in Behavioral Health Services, please call [404.851.8960](tel:404.851.8960).



BOOST YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS



Lymphedema: FAQs

By: Abbey Wright, OTR/L, CLWT, CLT-LANA

Cancer treatment is lifesaving and necessary; however, it may leave patients with new battles as they progress in their survivorship journey. Lymphedema is a common side effect of cancer and its treatments. Below are frequently asked questions and answers about lymphedema and related risk factors.

What is the lymphatic system?

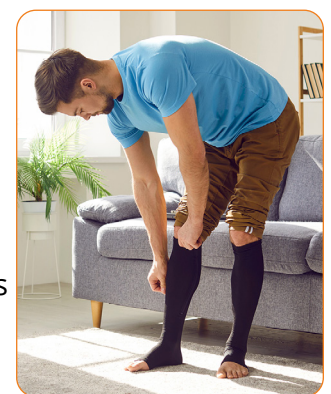
The lymphatic system is a network of lymph vessels that carry fluid containing proteins/cell waste/debris from the body and return it through the veins into the blood to be recycled.

What is lymphedema?

Lymphedema is the accumulation of excess fluid in the body due to damage of the lymphatic system, leading to swelling. It is a chronic condition that requires consistent management to prevent progression.

What causes lymphedema?

Lymphedema is caused when there is a lymphatic system breakdown due to excessive fluid or more fluid than the lymphatic system typically processes. It often
(continued on page 3)



Lymphedema: FAQs *(continued from page 2)*

occurs due to vascular insufficiency or vein problems. Lymphedema can also be caused from damage to or blocking of a previously functioning lymphatic system that may occur due to cancer and treatment side effects, tumors pushing on lymphatic system or trauma. Additionally, some individuals are born with deficits in the lymphatic system.

What signs or symptoms may indicate lymphedema?

- Intermittent swelling
- A sense of heaviness in the affected area
- Skin tightness
- Sensation changes
- Aching or limb discomfort
- Skin thickening
- Changes in movement

What are some risk factors for lymphedema?

- Cancer and treatment including surgery, radiation and some chemotherapy
- Tumors obstructing the lymphatic system
- Lymph nodes being removed or extensive tumor removal
- Infection history in the limb or affected region

- Vascular problems such as blood clot history or venous insufficiency
- Trauma
- Congenital abnormalities in the lymphatic system
- Obesity

What does therapy for lymphedema involve?

Treatment for lymphedema may include an individualized compression plan, exercise and/or skin care or manual lymphatic drainage as appropriate. Patients have the best results when wearing compression garments and actively participating in lymphedema therapy treatment plans.

What should I do if I am experiencing symptoms of lymphedema?

Contact a health care provider, explain the current symptoms and ask whether a lymphedema therapy referral is recommended. A physician referral is required for treatment. It is important to remember that earlier treatment and lymphedema management help to improve patient outcomes.

For questions about lymphedema therapy and other rehabilitation services offered at Northside Hospital visit [Northside Rehabilitation](#) or call [404.236.8030](tel:404.236.8030).

**How to Manage and Reduce Stress After a Cancer Diagnosis**

By: Lori Crosmer, LCSW

A cancer diagnosis can often lead to feelings of loss of control for the individual diagnosed and their caregiver(s). Cancer does not discriminate or care about plans to begin a new job, expand a family or begin retirement. Unfortunately, cancer is an equal opportunity disease.

I was 30 years old and eight weeks pregnant with my second daughter, when my husband and I were told our sweet 2-year-old daughter had been diagnosed with leukemia. Just the day before, we thought we were in total control when it came to our family and careers, but cancer had other plans.

Throughout cancer treatment, it is vital for those with a cancer diagnosis and caregivers alike to take care of themselves. Many aspects of the cancer journey cannot be controlled, but finding techniques to help manage and reduce stress is a small victory in taking back control. In my case, it was imperative to care for myself when I became a cancer caregiver because I was pregnant with my second daughter. Though it

may not always be easy, there are self-care tools that can help ease the body and mind. Think about little things that spark joy. Below are a few of my favorites:

- Take a scenic car ride or enjoy a walk in nature.
- Watch a comedy or read a light-hearted book.
- Focus on the here and now, what can you see, hear and feel around you in that moment to refocus your mindset.
- Close your eyes and take deep breaths; during each breath focus on a part of your body to relax.
- Schedule a phone or video call with someone who will make you laugh and smile.



No cancer journey or self-care toolbox is the same. Develop and practice what works best for you!

For more information on support groups and behavioral health resources at Northside Hospital, please click [here](#) or call [404.851.8960](tel:404.851.8960).



Antioxidants and Phytochemicals - What are They and How Do They Benefit Overall Health?

By: Katherine Dart, RD

Many patients and survivors are advised that eating more fruits and vegetables is healthy, but why is this? Fruits, vegetables and other plant foods are full of fiber, nutrients, antioxidants and phytochemicals that are beneficial to overall health.

What are antioxidants?

Antioxidants are molecules that protect cells from damage by neutralizing free radicals. Free radicals are unstable molecules produced by normal metabolic processes and from environmental exposure, such as smoking and pollution. Excessive production of free radicals can promote cell damage and disease, including cancer. Antioxidants act as protection for cells. The body generates antioxidants, and they can also be gained from eating plant foods, like fruits and vegetables.

What are phytochemicals?

Phytochemicals are bioactive compounds naturally found in plants. Over 10,000 types have been identified. Phytochemicals are responsible for the pigment, odor and taste of plants and act as a defense for plants against fungi, insects and disease. Phytochemicals have a variety of positive impacts on

human health, including antioxidant activity, reducing inflammation and anti-cancer effects.

How can you increase the intake of antioxidants and phytochemicals?

Eating a plant-based diet with a variety of colorful foods, including vegetables, fruit, nuts, seeds, whole grains, herbs and spices increases the body's intake of antioxidants and phytochemicals. It is always best to get nutrients from food rather than a supplement.

The [American Institute for Cancer Research \(AICR\)](#) and National Cancer Institute do not recommend relying on supplements for cancer prevention. There may be potential for harm with dietary supplements. For example, in 2022, the US Preventive Services Task Force (an independent panel that makes evidence-based recommendations about disease prevention) recommended NOT taking beta-carotene supplements to prevent cancer based on evidence from studies linking beta-carotene supplement intake with increased risk of lung cancer.

Enjoy a variety of colorful plant foods to get more phytochemicals and antioxidants!

AICR Recommendations:

To reduce the risk of cancer and cancer recurrence the AICR recommends a plant-based diet (aim to fill two-thirds of the plate with plant-based food) and to limit the intake of red meat, added sugars and ultra-processed foods. Visit the AICR [website](#) for more information and recipes.

Below are a few examples of phytochemicals and food sources by color:



Red

Contain carotenoids, such as lycopene: strawberries, cranberries, red peppers, watermelon



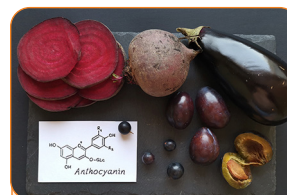
Orange & Yellow

Contain beta-carotene: carrots, sweet potatoes, cantaloupe, corn, mangoes, pumpkin, apricots



Green

Contain sulforaphane, isothiocyanates, indoles: spinach, broccoli, kale, cabbage, brussels sprouts, green tea, mint, rosemary, thyme, basil



Blue & Purple

Contain anthocyanins: blueberries, blackberries, concord grapes, eggplant, prunes, purple cabbage, lavender



White and Brown

Contain allicin and quercetin: onions, garlic, apples, cauliflower, parsnips, mushrooms

1. Coble Voss A, et al. *Oncology Nutrition for Clinical Practice*. Second ed. Chicago, IL: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics; 2021.

2. American Institute for Cancer Research, World Cancer Research Fund International. *Cancer Prevention Recommendations*. World Cancer Research Fund/American Institute for Cancer Research. Recommendations and Public Health and Policy Implications 2018. 3. National Cancer Institute, *Antioxidants and Cancer Prevention*. Updated Feb 6, 2017.

4. George BP, et al. *Antioxidants* (Basel). 2021;10:1455.

Survivor Story: Meet Gretchen *(continued from page 5)***What advice do you have for someone navigating their treatment and recovery journey?**

- Do not be afraid to seek help when something does not feel right. Your caregivers are your teammates, and they want to see you feel better.
- Get a good calendar or develop an organizational system to keep track of your schedule. I found it helpful to see what I had going on each day, so that I could make a plan for how to get to the next appointment.
- Put your energy into what you enjoy in life. There are so many things that demand time, but not all of them are worth it. Choose what matters most to you.
- Go outside and move. Nature is healing for me. Even if I could only go for a short walk, it was good to be outdoors and spend time observing the world around me.

How far out are you from treatment or is treatment ongoing?

I finished active treatment in July and am still working on regaining the strength I lost from chemotherapy with the help of physical therapy. I will be closely monitored for the next five years with oncologist visits and scans while I take a maintenance medication.

Closing Thoughts

Take time to grieve the things you have lost during your cancer journey, but do not forget to celebrate every victory, no matter how small it may seem!

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT & RESOURCES****Community Partner Spotlight: Susan G. Komen Georgia****Please share the name and purpose of the organization.**

Susan G. Komen Georgia: Our mission is to save lives by meeting the most critical needs of our communities and investing in breakthrough research to prevent and cure breast cancer.

Please describe the population that it serves.

Since 1982, we have collectively invested \$1.1 billion in life-saving breast cancer research. We support the entire state with resources including screening and diagnostic services, clinical trials, financial assistance and other care needs.

What resources do you provide to patients, survivors and/or caregivers?

Our focus is health equity and we believe that everyone should have an opportunity to be as healthy as possible despite their cultural or demographic background. We are committed to eliminating barriers to care for individuals and communities experiencing breast health inequities. Therefore, we connect people to high quality information and resources through our breast care helpline, financial assistance program and other patient services.

Please share the details of any outreach programs that your organization sponsors in the community.

The **financial assistance program** provides financial support to help assist with basic needs such as housing, childcare, food, medication, transportation and more. We connect patients to support and resources from diagnosis to survivorship. Finally, the breast care helpline is a bilingual support service that works with social workers to navigate our organization.

What type of volunteer opportunities do you offer and what is the best way to get involved?

Our volunteer opportunities include the annual Bubbles & Bling Gala where volunteers can assist with the planning of this event or day of event support with registration and guest support. The MORE THAN PINK walk is a 3,000+ person event where volunteers serve as event day leaders in various areas or as ambassadors. Finally, personal experience speakers or ambassador opportunities are available to support the Susan G. Komen Georgia staff at presentations, community fairs or corporate events.

Recipe Corner: Creamy Broccoli Apple Salad

Ingredients (for eight one-cup servings)

4 cups broccoli florets ½ cup dried cranberries
 ½ cup carrots, shredded 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
 ½ red onion, sliced thin 2 Tablespoons lemon juice
 2 apples, diced 1 Tablespoon honey
 ½ cup pecans, chopped Salt and pepper, to taste

Directions

1. In large bowl, combine broccoli, carrots, onion, apples, pecans and cranberries.
2. In separate bowl, whisk together yogurt, lemon juice and honey.
3. Combine yogurt mixture with vegetable mixture and toss well. Season to taste with salt and pepper.
4. Chill until ready to serve.

Nutrition facts per serving: 140 calories, 6 grams total fat (1 gram saturated fat, 0 grams trans fat), 5 milligrams cholesterol, 20 grams carbohydrates, 5 grams protein, 3 grams dietary fiber, 25 milligrams sodium, 15 grams sugar, 2 grams added sugar.

Photo and [recipe](#) by Zachari Breeding, MS, RDN, CSO, LDN, FAND



STORIES OF HOPE & HEALING*

Survivor Story: Meet Gretchen



What are the events that led to your cancer diagnosis?

In June of 2022, I was on a family trip to Disney World to celebrate my daughter's high school graduation and our 20th wedding anniversary.

Throughout the trip I was not feeling well and experienced pain in my lower abdomen. My husband encouraged me to speak with my doctor at my annual exam. During the exam, my doctor decided to run some tests, including bloodwork, an ultrasound and an MRI.

The tests showed a buildup of blood in the muscle of my uterus (from a previous uterine ablation), and a hysterectomy was recommended. I decided to postpone the surgery for a couple of months due to my father's recent multiple myeloma diagnosis. The surgery ended up being more complicated than originally planned, and my uterus was sent to pathology for testing. A couple of days later, the diagnosis came back as endometrial stromal sarcoma, which is a rare disease that is difficult to diagnose.

What treatment did you receive?

After the first surgery and diagnosis, I was referred to Dr. Gerald Allan Feuer, who recognized that the tumor had spread into my pelvic region. Because of the rarity of my tumor, Dr. Feuer consulted with several other oncologists before starting treatment. The team decided that I would undergo radiation and chemotherapy to shrink the tumor. After completing radiation therapy with Dr. Nancy Wiggers, I underwent surgery to remove my ovaries. After recovering from the second surgery for a couple weeks, I continued treatment with chemotherapy.

How and where did you receive support during your treatment and recovery?

My family has been an amazing support system on this journey. I talked with my husband before the first surgery about my preferences in case the surgeon had any immediate questions. My husband was there to answer my questions and help with my practical needs after my surgery. He has been by my side for all of my surgeries and treatments.

I also have three teenagers who kept me going on days that were hard. They provided comic relief and were understanding on days when I did not feel up to doing much. Additionally, I had multiple friends and family members who visited, brought meals and provided rides to treatment. We joked that I had my own Uber network.

Did you utilize patient support resources at NHCI? If so, which would you recommend?

I believe that asking for support and being involved in a community was vital to getting through my diagnosis and treatment. During my radiation treatment, I met with both a social worker and a dietitian at Northside and attended several virtual events and support groups through Cancer Support Community Atlanta. Currently, I am seeing a physical therapist at Northside Forsyth Rehabilitation. Personally, the knowledge and connection gained through these activities gave me strength and motivation.

(continued on page 6)

*Patients' stories are based on individual experiences. The process from diagnosis through treatment may vary as well as symptoms, side effects and provider recommendations.

CSC Atlanta Offers New Breathing Techniques Program



Cancer Support Community (CSC) Atlanta recently introduced a new program that offers a quick and easy way to practice mindfulness while also reducing stress and anxiety. "Introduction to Breathing Techniques" is a 30-minute virtual class that teaches different breathing techniques to relax the muscles, calm the mind and boost the immune system.

Class instructor, Bev Stegman, explains the benefits of the class as being a "consistent deep breathing practice with a variety of breathwork techniques that reduces the 'fight and flight' response to fear, illness, pain and injury." Through the breathing techniques taught in the class, attendees reduce stress, anxiety, fear and muscular tightness and tension, while activating a "rest and digest" response instead.

"Physiologically," Bev shares, "a deep breathing practice calms the nervous system, decreases the heart rate and blood pressure and increases lymphatic system functions, which facilitates healing." In just a half-hour class, participants learn techniques that can be practiced throughout daily life whenever anxiety and stress occur.

Whether anxious about an upcoming appointment, having trouble falling asleep or simply hoping to calm the mind, "Introduction to Breathing Techniques" can provide valuable methods to reduce stress that can be practiced anytime and anywhere.

Join Cancer Support Community Atlanta every Monday at noon for this virtual event. Register [here](#) and receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the program.

Upcoming Cancer Awareness Months

October: Breast Cancer and Liver Cancer

November: Lung Cancer, Pancreatic Cancer, Stomach Cancer, Carcinoid Cancer, Honoring Caregivers



EVENTS & CANCER CELEBRATIONS

CANCER SCREENING & PREVENTION

Skin Cancer Screening

[October 24, 2023](#) from 6-8 p.m. @ Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology – Atlanta

[November 6, 2023](#) from 6-8 p.m. @ Georgia Cancer Specialists - Rockdale in Conyers

[National Lung Cancer Screening Day](#)

November 11, 2023

@ Northside imaging locations in Cherokee, Cobb, DeKalb, Forsyth, Gwinnett, Henry and North Fulton counties

Northside is partnering with the American Cancer Society National Lung Cancer Roundtable, American College of Radiology, Radiology Health Equity Coalition and U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to raise awareness about lung cancer screening and offer low-dose CT (LDCT) lung screening. A physician order is required.

Call [404.531.4626](tel:404.531.4626) to schedule an appointment.

[Built To Quit – Smoking and Tobacco Cessation Course](#)

Next six-week session start date: November 14, 2023

Weekly classes include the American Lung Association Freedom from Smoking curriculum and are available in person and virtually. They are conducted in a group setting, which encourages participants to learn from each other.



Do you have a question you would like answered by an expert or a story to share in a future issue of Hope & Healing? If so, please send your questions or stories to survivornewsletter@northside.com.

Click [here](#) to sign up to receive the Survivorship Newsletter in your inbox.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

[Komen Georgia MORE THAN PINK Walk](#)
October 21, 2023 @ 8:30 a.m. @ Lenox Square in Atlanta

[2023 Atlanta Walk to End Colon Cancer](#)
October 21, 2023 @ 9:30 a.m.
@ John C. Howell Park in Atlanta

[American Lung Association Lung Force Walk](#)
October 28, 2023 at 9 a.m.
@ Atlantic Station Green Space in Atlanta

[Miles for Melanoma - Atlanta](#)
October 29, 2023 @ Brook Run Park in Atlanta

[Atlanta Cancer Care Foundation, Inc. Taste of Hope Casino Night](#)
Thursday, November 2, 2023 @ 7 p.m. @ Roswell Mill

[Lungevity- Breathe Deep](#)
November 4, 2023 – Virtual

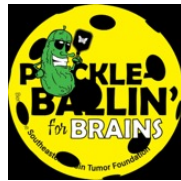
[Southeastern Brain Tumor Foundation's Pickleballin' for Brains Pickleball Tournament](#)
November 4-5, 2023 @ Cresswind Twin Lakes in Hoschton

NORTHSIDE EVENTS

[Tennis & Pickleball Against Breast Cancer](#)
October 27, 2023 @ North Fulton
Benefiting Northside Hospital's Breast Care Program

[Great American Smokeout](#)
November 16, 2023
Activities occurring at each Northside Hospital campus.
More information to come.

[Wine Women & Shoes](#)
November 18, 2023 @ 1 p.m.
@ The Hotel at Avalon in Alpharetta
Benefiting the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute



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