

HOPE & HEALING

A guide to helping survivors navigate through their journey

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Spring 2023 Issue

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

**NORTHSIDE
HOSPITAL**

CANCER INSTITUTE

BUILT TO BEAT CANCER



The Importance Of Women's Sexual Health and Cancer

By Christina Austin-Valere, PhD, LCSW, psych-oncology coordinator

Sexual health is an important topic to discuss with women undergoing treatment for cancer. Treatments and procedures ranging from chemotherapy, hormonal therapies, radiation and different surgical procedures may impact women's sexual health. It is important to discuss potential sexual side effects prior to beginning treatment to increase knowledge and engagement in one's care.

Common sexual side effects experienced by women undergoing cancer treatment can include:

- Decrease or loss of sexual desire
- Difficulty or inability in achieving and maintaining sexual arousal or orgasm
- Decrease or loss of lubrication
- Pain during sex
- Pain or numbness of the female sexual organs
- Vulvar and vaginal itching and irritation
- Early-onset menopause for women who are in premenopausal stages
- Fertility issues for women in child-bearing years

Many sexual side effects can be easily managed once they have been identified and evaluated. Vaginal moisturizers, lubricants, low-dose vaginal estrogen, lidocaine, pelvic floor physical therapy and other vaginal devices can help relieve some of the physical side effects associated with cancer treatment. Always talk to your physician before starting any over-the-counter treatments to avoid unnecessary harm.

Emotional and behavioral health issues also have a significant impact on women's sexual health and need equal attention and intervention. Fear of recurrence or return of cancer, feelings of powerlessness over cancer and treatment, grief, sadness, worry, frustration, anger and stress are common among women after a diagnosis of cancer and its subsequent treatments. In addition, women may experience a negative body image from treatment side effects, including hair loss, breast changes, weight loss/gain, which may alter self-perception about femininity and sexual appeal. It is important to remember you are not alone on your cancer journey. Begin by talking with your spouse/partner about your sexual health concerns.

Northside offers several behavioral health services to support and guide you before, during and after cancer treatment. Northside also offers specialized cancer treatments, behavioral health support, spiritual care, nutrition services, physical therapy and financial assistance as part of a comprehensive care plan for all of our patients. Our goal is to ensure you have optimum care and quality of life during your cancer journey. For more information about support groups and behavioral health resources, please visit the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute website, northside.com/services/cancer-institute/support-and-survivorship, or call the Behavioral Health Services office at 404.851.8960.

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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.



ASK AN EXPERT

Exercising After Cancer Treatment

By Joanna Collins, OT rehabilitation supervisor



Individuals who have completed cancer treatment and are ready to advance their activity level through exercise should always talk to their oncologist to ensure safety with exercise. Most people

are able to slowly increase exercise time and intensity as their treatment side effects lessen. Remember to take your time and be patient with yourself as you gradually increase your activity.

Try to include physical activity that uses large muscle groups such as your thighs, abdomen (belly), chest and back. Strength training, stretching and aerobic fitness are all important parts of a good exercise program. Try to include exercises that will help you keep muscle mass and bone strength, like exercising with a resistance band or light weights. You might want to include exercises that will increase your flexibility and keep the range of motion in your joints.

Always start with warm-up exercises for two to three minutes. Examples of warm-up exercises are shoulder shrugs, lifting arms overhead, toe tapping, marching and knee lifts. End your exercise session with stretching or flexibility exercises. Hold a stretch for about 15 to 30 seconds and relax. Examples of stretching are reaching overhead, deep breathing and bending over to touch your toes so that you relax all the muscle groups. Gradually build up to 150-300 minutes of moderate activity each week; walking is

an excellent way to meet this goal. Include resistance training exercises and stretching exercises at least two days per week.

Exercise has been shown to improve cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength, body composition, fatigue, anxiety, depression, self-esteem, happiness and several quality-of-life factors in cancer survivors. Exercise can also help individuals who are returning to work after cancer treatment, as regular exercise can improve energy levels and decrease feelings of tiredness or fatigue. As a reminder, always check with your oncologist before attempting any type of exercise to avoid unnecessary harm.

If you need guidance on how to safely progress with exercise, physical and occupational therapists are skilled professionals who are able to assist. Also, [Cancer Support Community Atlanta](#) provides exercise education and classes to create a safe environment for recovery.

Northside Hospital Rehabilitation Services is available to support you in your cancer journey and survivorship. Click [here](#) to learn more about Oncology Rehabilitation services (including virtual visits) offered at Northside Hospital. A physician referral is required for therapy services. If you have a question or want to schedule an in-person or virtual appointment, please contact our scheduling team at **404.236.8030**.

Reference: American Cancer Society. Physical Activity and the Person with Cancer. Updated March 16, 2022. Accessed March 28, 2023. [cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient.html#:~:text=Research%20shows%20that%20for%20most,do%20the%20things%20you%20like](https://www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient.html#:~:text=Research%20shows%20that%20for%20most,do%20the%20things%20you%20like)



BOOST YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS



Limiting Processed Foods – A Great Way To Optimize Your Health!

By Emily Hamm, MS, RDN, CSO, LD

Diet is a powerful tool to prevent and fight chronic disease. In regard to cancer, what we eat has the potential to modify our genes, either improving our health or leaving us susceptible to developing cancer.

Processed food consumption is at an all-time high, while intake of whole foods such as fruits and vegetables is not common. Approximately 60% of calories consumed by adults in the United States come
(continued on page 3)

Limiting Processed Foods - A Great Way To Optimize Your Health! (continued from page 2)

from processed foods. Examples of processed foods include frozen dinners, pastries, boxed meals and hot dogs. Many foods are processed for purposes of convenience, to increase shelf life or to increase palatability (texture, taste and appearance). This is done using food additives, artificial flavorings, colors, sweeteners and preservatives.

Interestingly, a recent study led by researchers from the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) found that for every 10% increase in consumption of processed foods, there is a 2% increased risk of cancer occurrence and 19% increased risk of ovarian cancer. Causation was not identified but other research has led to suspicions for food additives, etc. to be linked to hormone disruption and oxidation within the body.

The IARC has a classification system in which they review current research and can organize substances that may cause cancer or be carcinogenic.

Class 1 substances

Known to cause cancer in humans – examples: smoking/alcohol intake

Class 2A substances

Probable to cause cancer in humans – example: nitrates/nitrites (found in processed meats)

Class 2B substances

Possible to cause cancer in humans – example: titanium dioxide (found in sauces, icings, candies, toothpaste and chewing gum)

You might be thinking that if these classifications are in place, why do we still have these additives in foods? The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) maintains a list of 3,000+ ingredients used in processed foods. The FDA requires that a food additive be proven as safe for its intended use unless it is already “generally recognized as safe” by qualified experts with scientific training and experience or meets other exclusions as outlined in section 201(s) of the Federal Food and Drug and Cosmetic Act.

Even though the FDA monitors food additives, it is still a good idea to limit intake of these ingredients to promote good health. Besides limiting potential cancer risk, lowering processed food intake is also good for promoting healthy weight and lowering blood pressure and blood sugar.

Here are some simple ways to be an informed shopper and limit processed foods:

- Follow a plant-based diet – focus on eating whole fruits, vegetables, whole grains and high-quality animal proteins.
 - Packaged fruits and vegetables are okay to use when fresh is not available.
 - Look for foods with “no added salt” or “low sodium” on the label. In general, try to limit consumption of sodium to 2,000 milligrams daily.
 - Look for foods with no added sugars. Make sure to check the ingredients list, as sugar can have many different names (e.g., high fructose corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, corn syrup, malt syrup, honey, sweetener).
- Become aware of potentially harmful food additives – [cspinet.org](https://www.cspinet.org) is a great resource to learn more.
- Shop the outside perimeter of the grocery store versus shopping in the aisles.
- Look for foods with short ingredient lists – the fewer the ingredients in the food, the less processed.
- Enjoy the art of cooking. This allows you to better control the ingredients in your food (e.g., prepare a homemade pizza using ingredients in your pantry instead of buying frozen pizza).

If you have further questions, please reach out to a registered dietitian. You can set up an appointment today by calling **404.236.8036**.

References:

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Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. (n.d.). Overview of food ingredients, Additives & Colors. U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Updated February 6, 2018. Accessed February 1, 2023. <https://www.fda.gov/food/food-ingredients-packaging/overview-food-ingredients-additives-colors>

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Martínez Steele E, et al. *BMJ Open*. 2016;6(3):e009892.

Smith MT, et al. *Environ Health Perspect*. 2016;124(6):713-721.



Recipe Corner: Homemade Pizza Crust

Ingredients

1 ⅓ cups warm water (100-110°F)
 2 ¼ teaspoons instant yeast
 (one standard packet)
 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
 2 tablespoons extra virgin
 olive oil, plus more for pan and
 brushing on dough
 1 teaspoon salt
 3 ½ cups unbleached all-purpose
 flour (spooned & leveled)
 Sprinkle of cornmeal for dusting
 the pan (can substitute with
 almond flour or coconut flour)

Directions

1. Whisk the warm water, yeast, and granulated sugar together in the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with a dough hook or paddle attachment. Cover and allow to rest for 5 minutes. If you don't have a stand mixer, simply use a large mixing bowl and mix the dough with a wooden spoon or rubber spatula in the next step.
2. Add the olive oil, salt and flour. Beat on low speed for two minutes. Turn the dough out onto a lightly floured surface. With lightly floured hands, knead the dough for five minutes. After kneading, the dough should feel a little soft. Poke it with your finger – if it slowly bounces back, your dough is ready to rise. If not, keep kneading.
3. Lightly grease a large bowl and place dough in to proof for 60-90 minutes at room temperature. It should double in size.
4. Once proofed, heat oven to 425 degrees. Stretch dough to fit a 12-inch pizza pan. The dough should stretch out to ½ inch thick. Allow dough to rest for an additional few minutes while you prep your toppings.
5. Top your pizza with your favorite sauce (Choose sauces with no added salt and no added sugar and look for minimal ingredients for less processing). Top with your favorite toppings, such as a variety of fresh vegetables and lean ground beef. Try to avoid processed meats such as pepperoni, as these are a carcinogen.
6. Bake pizza for 13-15 minutes or until the crust is golden brown. Serve while hot.



Adapted from: sallysbakingaddiction.com/homemade-pizza-crust-recipe/



STORIES OF HOPE & HEALING*

Survivor Story: Meet Dave



What are the events that led to your cancer diagnosis?

I always struggled with bad acid reflux. I was diagnosed with COVID-19 in 2020, and I thought I was suffering from severe effects of the virus. I lost a lot of weight, 60-70 pounds in 7-8 weeks. I had to go to the bathroom every hour to throw up. I finally went to a gastrointestinal doctor for an endoscopy. The doctor could not complete the endoscopy

because he was concerned that I would asphyxiate on the table. I was ultimately diagnosed with esophageal cancer, which then spread to the stomach, better known as gastroesophageal cancer.

What treatment did you receive?

I received four rounds of FLOT chemotherapy (fluorouracil, leucovorin, oxaliplatin and docetaxel) every other week from September – October 2020. I then took five weeks off. On December 15th, I had surgery to remove my stomach, esophagus, and lymph nodes. I received four more rounds of FLOT from January 2021 – March 2021.

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

I started a Facebook group for other people with the same diagnosis, which ended up having 300 members. People who joined the Facebook group would share stories of their cancer journey. I also work as a teacher and a coach, and I received lots of support from my school. Lastly, my family was amazing.

Did you utilize patient support resources at Northside Hospital Cancer Institute (NHCI)?

I talked to several people in the Cancer Center, specifically the dietitians. I had a friend who worked as a dietitian, so I relayed a lot of questions to her.

What advice do you have for someone navigating their treatment and recovery journey?

Stay positive. Don't go down the rabbit hole. Don't read the internet. Listen to the experts that you're putting your trust in, and trust them because they want the best for you and will do whatever it takes for you to get through the journey. Don't be afraid to ask for help.

Where are you in your treatment journey?

Right now, I go back every six months for scans and to meet with my surgeon and oncologist. I take medications for nausea – Queasy Drops®, Zofran®, vitamin D and vitamin B12.

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



COMMUNITY SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Cancer Transitions Workshop Starts May 4th



Cancer Transitions is a free four-week virtual workshop designed to help cancer survivors make the transition from active treatment to survivorship. Each week, the 90-minute Cancer Transitions Workshop will focus on a different topic of survivorship:

- Session 1:** Get Back to Wellness: Take Control of Your Survivorship
- Session 2:** Emotional Health
- Session 3:** Eating Well and Staying Active
- Session 4:** Medical Management Beyond Cancer: What You Need to Know

For more details and registration, visit cscatlanta.org, call 404.843.1880 or email Lauren Walsh at lauren@cscatlanta.org.

Atlanta Cancer Care Survivor Group



Atlanta Cancer Care (ACC) will be hosting a FREE virtual group, Mind Over Matter, beginning April 19th for men and women being treated for cancer. This group is open to all cancer survivors, regardless of where they are being treated in the Northside system.

Mind Over Matter uses evidence-based strategies to help decrease feelings of anxiety and depression and increase a sense of well-being. For more information or to register, contact Emma Shin at eshin@atlantacancercare.com or call 404.731.1876.



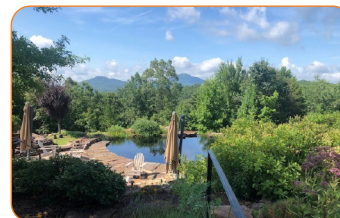
GET INVOLVED

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Offers Two Retreats For Patients With Cancer

Camp Hope

Northside Hospital-Atlanta Auxiliary hosts Camp Hope, a three-day weekend retreat held at the Elohee Retreat Center in Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia, for adults who have been diagnosed and/or treated for cancer at a Northside facility. Campers participate in a variety of educational, recreational and inspirational activities. There is also time for nature walks, board games and quiet reflection. The goal of Camp Hope is to enable visitors to return home with a renewed sense of spirit to help them prepare for the journey ahead.

Camp Hope will be held September 29 – October 1, 2023. Campers must be 18 years or older, ambulatory and independent. Transportation to and from Camp Hope will be provided and the entire weekend stay will be free of charge. Camp Hope applications will be



available at Northside Hospital physician's practices, Northside-affiliated treatment facilities and online at the Northside Auxiliary's website, northsideatlaux.com on June 6, 2023. Camp Hope focuses on survivors who have completed their primary cancer treatment and are in their first year post treatment. We encourage survivors to apply early due to limited openings. For more information, please call 404.851.8707 or 404.851.8992.

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Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Offers Two Retreats For Patients With Cancer: *(continued from page 5)***Metastatic Breast Cancer Retreat**

We are excited to announce that the Metastatic Breast Cancer (MBC) Retreat will take place this year, after three years of COVID-related cancellations. This year's retreat will be September 15-17, 2023 at the Elohee Retreat Center in Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia. The MBC Retreat is offered at no cost to participants, thanks to generous support of the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute and the Northside Hospital Foundation. The retreat schedule is thoughtfully planned with patients in mind, and the program is facilitated by a team from Northside, including a clinical oncology social worker, oncology nurse and other staff. Throughout the weekend, participants have the opportunity to engage in planned activities (e.g. discussion groups, yoga, massage and nature walks) in a scenic setting in the North Georgia Mountains. The program also includes two nights of lodging in private suites, delicious chef-prepared meals and use of the facility amenities.

Attendance is limited to patients with stage 4 breast cancer and one caregiver of their choosing who is over 18 years of age (can be a spouse, partner or friend). We encourage patient and caregiver pairs to apply as soon as possible since we expect to have more interest than we have capacity.

For the safety and well-being of all participants, all patient attendees must be cleared for participation by their treating provider at the time of their application and again just prior to the retreat. Each participant (patient and caregiver) will need to complete an application and participate in a brief interview with an oncology nurse to ensure that participation in all retreat activities is appropriate and safe. For more information, please contact Kymberly Duncan at 404.303.3676 or kymberly.duncan@northside.com.

**EVENTS & CANCER CELEBRATIONS****CANCER SCREENING & PREVENTION****Built To Quit – Smoking and Tobacco Cessation Course**

Next six-week session start date: May 2, 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.

**Mobile Mammography Van – Screen Atlanta**

May 8, 2023 @ Atlanta Cancer Care – Conyers

To schedule an appointment or for additional information, call 404.531.4444.

Skin Cancer Screenings

May 9, 2023 from 6-8 p.m. @ Northside Hospital Cancer Support Center – Gwinnett

May 23, 2023 from 6-8 p.m. @ Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology – Forsyth

Prostate Cancer Screening

June 15, 2023 from 5:30-8 p.m. @ Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Radiation Oncology – Cherokee

COMMUNITY EVENTS**NHCI-SPONSORED CANCER WALKS/EVENTS****East Georgia Cancer Coalition Miles for Moms Run/Walk 5K**

May 13, 2023 @ 8 a.m. @ Milledge Avenue Baptist Church in Athens

It's The Journey Georgia 5K Run for Breast Cancer

May 13, 2023 @ 8 a.m. @ The Shoppes at River Crossing in Macon

American Lung Association Fight for Air Climb

May 20, 2023 @ 8 a.m. @ Promenade Tower in Atlanta

Register with code "TEAM". Team Name: Northside Hospital: The Lung and the Breathless



NHCI-SPONSORED CANCER WALKS/EVENTS *(continued)*

[Atlanta Cancer Care Foundation Inc.'s Feathers 5K](#)

June 3, 2023 @ 8 a.m. @ Oglethorpe University in Brookhaven

[Harts of Teal 5K & 1M Color Run: Giving a Voice to the Whisper of Ovarian Cancer in Fayetteville](#)

June 17, 2023 @ 9 a.m. @ ONE Church in Fayetteville



SUPPORT & EDUCATION EVENTS

[Let's Talk About: Pancreatic Cancer in Our Community](#)

May 11, 2023 from 12-2 p.m. – virtual or in-person

Featuring: Eddie K. Abdalla, MD, FACS & Robin Benardot, RDN, CSO from Atlanta Liver & Pancreas Specialists and Cristall Harkins, Patient Survivor
A free community luncheon at Cancer Support Community – Atlanta



[Young Women's Initiative Survivorship Series presented in partnership with Living Beyond Breast Cancer \(LBBC\)](#)

June 24, 2023, from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. @ Northside Woodstock Education Center, 2001 Professional Parkway, Woodstock, GA

Session 1: Hot and Bothered: Coping with Early Menopause & Stay Alert: Managing the Long-Term Side Effects

July 22, 2023, from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. @ Northside Woodstock Education Center, 2001 Professional Parkway, Woodstock, GA

Session 2: Self-Care After Breast Cancer & Let's Talk About Sex and Breast Cancer

For questions and to RSVP for these events, please contact Dee Land at Demetrice.Land@northside.com.

2023 Patient and Caregiver Conference: Navigating the Cancer Journey & Beyond

August 12, 2023 @ The Hotel at Avalon, Alpharetta, GA
Save the date. Registration opening soon.

AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY RELAY FOR LIFE EVENTS

[Relay for Life or North Fulton](#)

May 5, 2023 from 6-10 p.m. @ Webb Bridge Middle School in Alpharetta

[Relay for Life of Atlanta](#)

May 12, 2023 from 6-10 p.m. @ North Atlanta High School in Atlanta

[Relay for Life of Gwinnett](#)

May 13, 2023 from 6-10 p.m. @ Suwanee Town Center in Suwanee



NORTHSIDE FOUNDATION EVENT

[30th Annual Charity Golf Classic](#)

May 15, 2023 @ Atlanta Athletic Club in Johns Creek
Benefiting the Blood and Marrow Transplant Program



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

Upcoming Cancer Awareness Months
May: Bladder Cancer, Brain Tumor and Melanoma/Skin Cancer
June: National Cancer Survivor Month

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