Establishing a plan for survivorship brings you a little closer to getting back your life back after cancer treatments are over. With a plan, a good support team and a commitment to moving beyond a cancer diagnosis, it becomes a little easier every day to regain a sense of control over your health, relationships and your future.

After treatment ends, cancer survivors begin a whole new phase of balancing and adjusting to living with a cancer diagnosis: survivorship. The contrast between life during cancer treatment and life after treatments end doesn’t have to be as confusing as it may seem. Survivorship care planning is a way to manage this transition with the support of your care team. A Survivorship Care Plan is a formal way to get your care team’s advice on questions like, “Do I need to seek follow-up care?” “When should I worry about cancer recurrent?” and “How do I maintain my well-being?” Its also important to receive receive a treatment summary, as part of a care plan, that includes diagnostic tests and cancer characteristics. Also as part of your treatment summary, your provider should provide recommendations for adopting a healthy lifestyle, referrals for follow-up care, and a list of support resources.

Fertility and Cancer

Fertility is a major concern for many young cancer patients who may be thinking about planning for families in the future. Some cancer treatments have the potential of putting the ability to conceive at risk. A patient’s risk of infertility often depends on the duration and vigor of treatment, age, and physical condition. Some types of chemotherapy and radiation can destroy sperm and eggs. So its important to discuss this with your doctor prior to starting treatment. There are options for both men and women that can improve their probability of conceiving in the future. A woman can preserve her eggs through cryopreservation, or freezing and storing the eggs until she is ready.

Continued on Page 2
Relationships and Cancer

Cancer can strain relationships, or it can empower them. Either way, something as overwhelming as a cancer diagnosis inevitably alters the dynamic between friends, family and significant others. In order for this change to be positive, open and honest communication is vital.

Young adults, who are still learning to develop and manage relationships, often struggle to maintain these while coping with a serious, life-changing illness like cancer. When it comes to friends, it is important to let them know your limitations. And, it’s equally important to stay engaged and participate in social activities whenever possible to avoid feeling alone. Stay in contact with your friends as much as possible—even if it means doing it through social media. You might find that friends shy away out of fear of coping with a loss. To prevent this, be upfront and discuss your condition honestly but without overwhelming them.

Family will also be a source of comfort and support to you. But, they too can feel frightened at the thought of losing someone they love to cancer. So, again, honest communication is important. It may seem like a good idea to leave out the details of diagnosis, or not discuss physical needs or emotional burdens to avoid creating stress for them. But avoiding frank, honest discussions can create disconnects. Getting professional assistance can help you develop the communication and family relationship skills needed to foster the support you need from your family.

Often, our significant others experience the same anxiety and stress as someone with a cancer diagnosis. And, issues that existed prior to a cancer diagnosis may become more extreme. In other cases, cancer may strengthen the commitment between the cancer patient and his or her partner, bringing the two closer together. Either way, it is important to regularly discuss concerns with one another. Worries without discussion can create a sense of hopelessness, which can be unhealthy for both people, and is strenuous on the relationship.

In any relationship, communication is key. No matter where the relationship stands, honesty will help sustain and improve it.

Additional source: www.cancer.net

Fertility and Cancer, Continued from Page 1

A woman may also have the option of allowing doctors to “silence” her ovaries during treatment in an attempt to preserve fertility. Men can use sperm banks to store and freeze their sperm for later use. Though these options may not be covered by insurance in some cases, there are programs available that can help. To learn more, visit:

https://www.savemyfertility.org/
Or,
http://stupidcancer.org/support/fertility.shtml
Talking to Your Doctor

Talking to your doctor about your cancer treatment and symptoms can be intimidating. But, your treatment planning will be easier and more clear with proper communication. Begin by compiling a list of questions and concerns that you can bring to your appointments. Make sure to let your doctor’s staff know that you will need a little extra time to talk about your concerns when you schedule your next appointment so more time can be allotted. Also, jot notes down to help you remember what they say, the names of the members on your health care team, treatment side effects, and/or how to take your medication. You may also want to record the conversation with your smart phone so you can remember key points. It’s okay to ask follow-up questions if you are confused. Be straightforward in your discussions and acknowledge any potential problems as needed. Also, you may want to bring a friend or family member to doctor’s visits may help you feel less overwhelmed.

Offer your doctor personal information that may be helpful in planning your treatment, such as your cultural beliefs, cancer seen in your family tree, or how much you are affected by stress. It’s important to remember that your doctor sees many patients and may forget a detail about a specific problem you have brought up before. Also, it wouldn’t hurt to ask your doctor for a contact in case of emergency.

Throughout your treatment, be an advocate for yourself, but work effectively with your doctor to establish your best options for treatment. Decide how much you want to leave up to your doctor, but do not shy away from trying to understand the decisions he or she makes. With your teamwork, your treatment can be much more satisfactory.

Your Emotional and Physical

Being diagnosed with cancer often presents emotional burdens for patients even after they are in remission. Mental health care and emotional support can be very helpful for patients of all ages. Young adults, especially, may greatly benefit from talking to other survivors in a support group. There are also online communities survivors can join for additional support and comfort. Resources can be found through your school, employer, healthcare provider or community that can help.

Physical limitations may continue even after patients complete their treatment. It is very important for survivors to maintain their health as they transition back into their education or occupation. A lack of sleep can trigger several conditions that interfere with optimal health. Sleep is essential for restoring energy, repairing damaged tissues, and coping with stress. If having trouble sleeping, be sure to discuss this with your doctor. Stress is another negative trigger for certain health conditions. You can reduce stress by exercising regularly, eating a nutritious diet, and keeping a journal. Young adults should also stay away from smoking and excessively drinking. Both increase your risk for cancer recurrence and other chronic conditions. People who have had cancer are susceptible to other chronic diseases, so it is important for survivors to be proactive in their health in order to smoothly ease back into their daily lives.

Reaching survivorship is a significant goal in a young cancer patient’s life, but transitioning back to an active and busy life can be loaded with road blocks. Taking care of yourself and creating a health lifestyle management plan is a great way to begin your new life after cancer.

Additional source: American Cancer Society
**Living with Cancer**
Wednesday, Sept 28, 2016
11:30—12:30 pm

**Frankly Speaking about the Challenges of Being a Young Cancer Survivor**

Please plan to join us on Wednesday, September 28 from 11:30—12:30 for a roundtable discussion about your concerns, issues and questions for our survivorship expert, Dr. Smita Bhatia, Associate Director for Cancer Outcomes and Survivorship. We will also be joined by a young adult cancer survivor, Martin Townsend, who will talk about a new community support group for young adult cancer survivors that will start in January, 2017.

*Lunch will be provided to those who register.*

To register or for more information: **tgw318@uab.edu**

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**CANCERcare® Webinars**

**Young Adult Survivorship: Fertility, Sexuality and Intimacy**


**Communicating with your Healthcare Team After Treatment: making the most of your visit**


**Helping Children and Teens Understand When a Parent or Loved One Has Cancer**


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**Want to Volunteer?**

**Join Our Patient / Caregiver Advisory Committee**

Researchers at UAB are looking for your advice and guidance for a new supportive care program for those who are terminally ill. The program seeks to develop supportive care Educates, Nurtures, Advises Before Life Ends (ENABLE). Compensation is available.

For more information: **rtaylor@uabmc.edu**

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**Research Study on Cancer-Related Fatigue**

Participants should:
- Have completed treatment from 6 months—10 years
- Be between 19-70 years old
- Have problems with fatigue that effects daily life.

For more information:
Call: (205) 934-6326