



HEALTHY  
CHOICES  
← AS A  
LIFESTYLE

Meghan, age 18,  
12-year Wilm's Tumor survivor

HEALTHY CHOICES  
AS A LIFESTYLE

*The secret of health for  
both mind and body is  
not to mourn for the past,  
worry about the future,  
or anticipate troubles, but  
to live in the present moment  
wisely and earnestly.*

BUDDHA

## Healthy Choices as a Lifestyle

**B**EING FINISHED WITH CANCER TREATMENT IS A new and exciting time for a survivor to transition back into the “normal” life they had before treatment began. Seeing old friends, going to the movies, and just hanging out and enjoying life are all things to look forward to and appreciate. At the same time, it is more important than ever to keep track of your well-being and stay healthy.

Be proactive with your follow up care, ask your health care providers questions, and keep in mind these tips to stay in good health—after all, you are the best person to care for your body!

### Living Healthy after Cancer

Ten Steps to Success	
1	Eat Right
2	Be Physically Active
3	Don't Smoke...Ever!
4	Keep Your Teeth Healthy
5	Protect Your Skin
6	Learn About Safe Sex
7	Avoid Alcohol and Drugs
8	Stay Safe
9	Make Good Life Decisions
10	Be Proactive with Your Healthcare

## Eat Right

**E**VERYONE KNOWS THE OLD SAYING, “YOU ARE WHAT you eat.” From a very young age, we are constantly reminded to eat our leafy greens. Bad eating habits at a young age can lead to heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and even some types of cancer later on in life. It’s a scary thought, but it is totally in your control.

Now, you don’t necessarily have to go on some crazy tofu diet or eat only organic vegetables grown in your backyard; but, as a cancer survivor, eating right is vital to good health.

We’ve all heard of the food pyramid, so try to follow it. Maintain a varied and well-balanced diet that is high in lean protein, fruits, and vegetables, and low in greasy fats and empty carbohydrates, like fries and pizza. Try grabbing an apple instead of that bag of chips, substitute white bread with whole grains, and make sure to drink plenty of water.

Making the right eating choices will keep your body strong and fit and help to fight off future diseases.



### Benefits of Eating Right

- ▶ Lowers risk of heart disease
- ▶ Reduces the risk of certain cancers
- ▶ Helps prevent strokes
- ▶ Fights against diabetes
- ▶ Prevents high cholesterol
- ▶ Bolsters energy
- ▶ Controls your weight

## Tips on Eating Healthy

- **Stick to the Food Pyramid:** The easiest way to follow a good nutrition plan is to follow the food pyramid:
  - 4-5 daily servings of fruits and veggies
  - 2-3 servings of dairy products and lean meats
  - Limited amount of fats and sugars
  - Plenty of whole grains (wheat, cereal, brown rice, etc.)
- **Read the label:** What you might think of as one serving might not be what the Food and Drug Administration thinks of as one serving. Keeping a mental note of what you eat throughout the day and its nutritional value will help you stay balanced and on track.
- **Make your own food:** Not only will you gain a sense of pride in your culinary creation, it's a lot healthier and cheaper than eating out.
- **Don't overeat:** It is always tempting to "Biggie Size," but eating smaller portions will keep you nourished without over doing it.
- **Don't undereat:** You know not to overeat, but don't "under" eat, as well. Eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, deprive the body of needed nutrients and energy and can lead to life threatening problems.

## Be Physically Active

**D**EPENDING ON YOUR TYPE OF CANCER AND treatment, it is important to first talk to your doctor about the safest and most effective way for you to stay in shape.

Being physically active can take on many forms, from running long distance, to lifting weights in the gym; to just taking a relaxing walk in the park, or playing catch with a friend. Whatever it is you decide to do, try to shoot for at least 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

Exercise has benefits for everyone, but especially for cancer survivors. It helps promote healing of damaged tissues and organs, and decreases the risk for secondary cancers. Furthermore, being active is not only good for your body, but it also helps your mind build self-confidence and reduce stress.



### Benefits of Exercise

- ▶ Lowers risk of heart disease
- ▶ Increases mobility
- ▶ Builds muscle and strengthens bones
- ▶ Reduces the risk of cancer
- ▶ Helps prevent strokes
- ▶ Reduces stress and depression
- ▶ Fights against diabetes
- ▶ Controls your weight
- ▶ Helps you look and feel good

## Tips on Staying Active

- **Do something you enjoy:** The best way to make sure that you will stick to being active is to find something that you have fun doing. Shooting hoops, dancing, swimming, and even golf are all great options—whatever it is that gets you moving.
- **Find a friend:** Exercising with a friend will help keep you motivated and may even spark a friendly, competitive spirit.
- **Put it in your schedule:** Try to plan out your day with a time reserved for exercise. Whether it is earlier in the morning, right after school, or later in the evening, pick a time and stick to it. Having a specific part of the day set aside for exercise will help prevent you from procrastinating and falling under the “I’ll do it later” syndrome.
- **Be realistic:** All of us are built differently with varying athletic abilities. What may work well for others may not work well for you, so figure out your limitations and work within them. This way you will be less likely to get frustrated or give up after a few days. Remember, you do not have to become ‘Rocky’ to achieve good results. In fact, it is vital for your muscles to have time to rest and repair, so don’t over do it.
- **Keep track of your results:** The biggest thing people regret not doing in exercising is keeping a record of their progress. Keeping track of your improvements will not only help encourage you to stay on schedule, but will let you see how far you have come. You can even treat yourself on special milestones and achievements with small rewards to keep you motivated.

## Don't Smoke...Ever!

**S**MOKING IS PROBABLY ONE OF THE SINGLE MOST controllable factors that can be avoided to stay healthy. If you do not smoke—don't start! If you already smoke regularly—quit! Quitting can be difficult, but be persistent and the rewards to your health and overall well-being will be enormous.

Remember, cigarettes alone kill more Americans than car accidents, AIDS, alcohol, drugs, murders, suicides, and fires...COMBINED! Just being around friends or family members who smoke exposes you to “secondhand smoke,” which is dangerous and should be avoided.

Smoking not only greatly increases the risk for cancer, but also puts you at risk of developing other chronic illnesses. Survivors who have been exposed to chemotherapy such as Bleomycin, BCNU, and CCNU, or have had chest irradiation, may already have weak lungs, which are more susceptible to the harmful effects of smoking.



### Harmful Effects of Smoking

- ▶ Greatly increases the risk of cancer
- ▶ Increases heart rate and blood pressure
- ▶ Increases risk of lung disease
- ▶ Increases risk for stomach ulcers
- ▶ Reduces energy level
- ▶ Causes chronic cough and breathing problems
- ▶ Causes bad breath and sore throat
- ▶ Discolors teeth
- ▶ Increases risk of complications in pregnancy

Not only are cigarettes harmful to your health and make your breath smell, they are also expensive! Wouldn't you rather use that money to go out with friends, buy the latest video game, or take a date to the movies? Be smart and do not smoke!

## Tips on Quitting Smoking

- **Think of your health:** Before you decide to quit smoking, do the research to understand the health risks associated with cigarettes. Knowing that every cigarette you put into your mouth is taking valuable time off your life will help to keep you focused if you waver.
- **Keep your mouth occupied:** Chew on a piece of gum, suck on hard candy—do whatever it takes to keep your mouth busy and your mind off cigarettes. Having something on hand will help you replace the urge and lessen the craving to put a cigarette in your mouth.
- **Keep your mind occupied:** In the initial weeks after you have quit, try to keep yourself as busy as possible. Learn a new sport, go see the latest movie, or spend quality time with your family. People smoke when they are bored, so keep yourself active.
- **Avoid temptation:** Once you have decided to quit smoking, throw away all your cigarettes. Try to avoid any “smoky” situations in the first few weeks, including friends and family who smoke.
- **Think ‘cash money’:** Smoking costs money...a lot of money! In fact, smoking is so expensive that the average smoker spends \$1,600 a year on cigarettes. Just imagine all the other things you could do with \$1,600!

## Keep Your Teeth Healthy

**B**RUSHING, FLOSSING, AND KEEPING YOUR TEETH healthy is important for any young person, but even more so for cancer survivors. Cancer treatments, such as radiation and chemotherapy, can lead to tooth decay and other dental problems such as:

- cavities
- thin or weakened teeth roots
- enamel problems (the protective outer covering of teeth)
- severe dryness and sensitivity

This is why it's important to brush your teeth at least twice a day with fluoride toothpaste, floss regularly, and use antibacterial mouthwash. While no one likes to visit the dentist more than they have to, it is especially important for cancer survivors to set up regular visits with the dentist every six months.

	Things Harmful to Your Teeth	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Smoking</li><li>▶ Alcohol</li><li>▶ Soda</li><li>▶ Sugary snacks</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Coffee/Tea</li><li>▶ Juices</li><li>▶ Eating disorders (anorexia/bulimia)</li></ul>

## Tips on Good Dental Hygiene

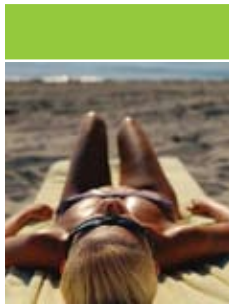
- **Snack attack:** Everyone likes to eat candies, cookies, and sugary snacks. It's fine to have them from time to time, but try not to make it a habit. Eating the right foods will help prevent cavities and tooth decay and will keep that smile bright and shiny. Also, try to avoid soda and other sugary drinks. If you must have a soda, try drinking diet—it does not taste as bad as you might think and it has little or no sugar.
- **Brush those teeth...brush them well:** No matter how lazy you feel at night or early in the morning, make sure to set up a regular schedule to brush your teeth (with fluoride toothpaste) at least twice a day. Talk to your dentist about the proper technique (yes, there is a proper technique!) to best brush your teeth. This will help keep them clean and healthy for a long time to come.
- **Don't forget to floss:** The thought of taking a piece of thread and then stringing it through your teeth like a violin probably doesn't sound like the idea of a fun time, but flossing works wonders for your dental health. Not only does flossing clean those hard to reach places between teeth, it also prevents gum disease and bad breath. Try to floss at least once a day.
- **Guard them well:** Make sure to wear the proper type of mouth-guard when playing sports. This will help to keep your smile protected, in one piece, and will help prevent broken teeth or mouth damage in the event of an accident.

## Protect Your Skin

**P**ROTECT YOUR SKIN...IT'S THE ONLY ONE YOU HAVE!  
Not many people realize that the skin is the largest organ in our bodies. As a result, we neglect to take care of it as well as we should.

As cancer survivors, it is especially important to take good care of your skin to avoid skin cancer. The best way to do this is to protect your skin from the sun and its harmful UV rays. Keeping these tips in mind will keep your skin protected and you looking healthy and young:

- Wear protective clothing while in the sun
- Use sunscreen with at least a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15
- Reapply sunscreen as needed, or use one that is water resistant if exercising outside or swimming.
- Avoid extreme weather conditions or being outside during peak high temperatures, usually from 10am–2pm.



### Harmful Effects of Sun Exposure

- ▶ Increased risk of skin cancer
- ▶ Sunburns
- ▶ Dry and wrinkled skin
- ▶ Skin discoloration
- ▶ Eye damage (cataracts)

## Tips on Keeping Your Skin Safe


- **Don't forget the sunscreen:** In the fight against keeping your skin safe from the harmful rays of the sun, sunscreen should be your constant companion. If you go outside, especially during mid-day, always remember to apply sunscreen with an SPF of at least 15.
- **Keep it covered:** Another good way of keeping your skin safe and healthy is to keep it covered and protected. Wearing fabric that has a tighter weave, such as cotton, prevents excessive sunlight from passing through clothes and harming your skin.
- **Avoid tanning:** Tanning has also become a popular thing to do, but as cancer survivors, it is something to be avoided. It is a common perception that indoor tanning beds are safer than being outside, but in fact they can cause damage to your skin.

## Learn About Safe Sex

**T**HE 2008 STUDY BY THE CENTER FOR DISEASE Control and Prevention has reported 1 in 4 teenage girls in America having a sexually transmitted disease (STD). Based on this information, it is vital that young adults today realize the importance of safe sex.

Living in a day and age where television and magazines have sensationalized and targeted sex to a younger audience, it is important not to succumb to peer pressure and engage in any risky behavior.

Though this is a difficult topic to discuss, it is really important to be aware of the real risk of STDs, and arm yourself with the knowledge to make good choices.

	Common STDs
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ Chlamydia</li><li>▶ Genital Herpes</li><li>▶ Human Papilloma Virus (HPV)</li><li>▶ Gonorrhea</li><li>▶ Hepatitis B</li><li>▶ HIV and AIDS</li><li>▶ Pelvic Inflammatory Disease</li><li>▶ Pubic Lice (Crabs)</li><li>▶ Syphilis</li><li>▶ Trichomoniasis</li></ul>

## Tips on Safe Sex

- **Practice abstinence:** The only way to fully guard yourself from the threat of STDs or unwanted pregnancies is by practicing abstinence. Though contraceptives are available, abstaining from sex is the only way to guarantee that you are fully protected.
- **Be mature:** Make sure you are both physically and mentally mature before deciding to become sexually active, especially in your teen years. Really think hard about the possible consequences of your actions, such as becoming pregnant or having a child. Ask yourself if you are ready to take on these responsibilities.
- **Talk to an adult:** If you have any questions about sex or sexually related activities, don't be shy to ask your parents or a trusted adult. If you are embarrassed to talk to your parents, confide in your health care provider as they are required by law to respect your privacy.
- **Use good judgment:** If you decide that you do want to become sexually active, be responsible and make sure that you and your partner practice safe sex. Always make sure that a condom and another contraceptive are used to protect you and your partner from STDs and unwanted pregnancy.

## Avoid Alcohol and Drugs

**T**HE THOUGHT OF USING DRUGS OR ABUSING ALCOHOL should never enter the mind of a cancer survivor. Not only is drug and alcohol abuse harmful to your health, it is also illegal (if under 21, for alcohol).

Alcohol is a depressant that affects your central nervous system and impairs your judgment and mental status. Most people enjoy a glass of wine with meals, which is thought to be good for the heart. However, alcohol is frequently abused, especially by young adults, and results in life-altering decisions that are physically and psychologically self-destructive.

Alcohol increases the risk of certain cancers, such as liver, throat, mouth, and breast. Survivors of childhood cancer may already have damaged organs from the chemotherapy or radiation. Excessive alcohol makes that damage worse.



### Harmful Effects of Alcohol

- ▶ Liver disease
- ▶ Heart disease
- ▶ Diabetes
- ▶ Stroke
- ▶ Increased risk of secondary cancer
- ▶ High blood pressure
- ▶ Heartburn and stomach ulcers
- ▶ Skin discoloration
- ▶ Premature aging
- ▶ Menstrual problems, decreased fertility, spontaneous abortions
- ▶ Abnormalities in babies born to mothers who drink during pregnancy

## Common Drugs and Their Harmful Effects

- **Marijuana:** The most common drug in the US, marijuana is usually smoked and can lead to lung damage, high blood pressure, increased heart rate, and mood swings. It is especially dangerous as a “gateway” drug,” possibly leading to the use of more severe substances.
- **Cocaine/Crack:** Cocaine can be either snorted or injected, while crack is usually smoked. This is considered a “hard” drug that wreaks havoc on your central nervous system and can lead to deadly heart attacks.
- **Heroin:** Heroin can be used in many different ways, but is usually injected. It is highly addictive and causes stomach problems, skin irritation, scarred or collapsed veins, and breathing troubles. Sharing of needles also raises the risk of HIV and Hepatitis.
- **Ecstasy:** A popular drug at clubs and raves, ecstasy is usually taken in pill form and can lead to severe hallucination, elevated body temperatures, damage to vital organs, and even death.
- **LSD:** A man-made hallucinogen, this chemical can lead to “acid trips”, which can cause disorientation, slurred speech, confusion and panic, and even a coma.
- **Methamphetamine:** Also known as meth or speed, methamphetamines cause severe delusions and can lead to neurosis and brain damage.

## Stay Safe

**B**EING AWARE OF YOUR SURROUNDINGS AND avoiding risky behavior are important parts of living safely. As a teenager and young adult, life is filled with endless possibilities. Balancing common sense with good, safe behavior will help you enjoy it to the fullest.

Having battled cancer, many childhood cancer survivors gain a fresh perspective on life and how to engage in it. Some feel a renewed sense of adventure and indestructibility, while others become more cautious and wary. Both feelings are completely normal. It is important to remember not to let your past history of cancer endanger or limit the decisions you make to either extreme.

As cancer survivors, you may have health concerns to consider that can make certain activities a health risk. It is always important to seek counsel with your healthcare provider before considering risky behavior.

### Tips on Staying Safe at Home

- ▶ Always keep handy a list of emergency numbers and contacts
- ▶ Never let strangers into the house, especially when home alone
- ▶ Create a safety plan with your parents to implement in the event of an emergency
- ▶ Ensure that guns and firearms are well secured and locked away
- ▶ Become familiar with proper CPR technique and first aid
- ▶ Keep fire and carbon dioxide alarms tested and working with fresh batteries
- ▶ Always wear protective helmets when using bikes, scooters, skateboards, and motorcycles

## Tips on Staying Safe in the Car

- ▶ Always wear a seatbelt when sitting in a car
- ▶ NEVER drive while under the influence of drugs/alcohol or ride in a car with someone who is under the influence
- ▶ Always carry personal identification and a medical history card (like the one provided in this guide), especially if you are on medication, have a seizure disorder, or have diabetes
- ▶ Don't talk on the cell phone when driving, unless using a hands-free kit
- ▶ Try to park in safe and well lit areas
- ▶ Limit the number of passengers as loud music and friends can become a distraction while driving
- ▶ Pull over or take a taxi if you feel tired or sleepy while driving
- ▶ Never pick up hitchhikers

## Make Good Life Decisions

**H**AVING BEATEN CANCER, YOU HAVE SO MUCH TO be proud of and even more to look forward to! You have already succeeded in overcoming one of life's biggest hurdles. As you move forward in life, there may still be other trials and tribulations. Some may be major and life changing, while others may be small, fleeting, and inconsequential.

Regardless of the issues that may arise, it is important to have a well-grounded moral and ethical foundation on which you can always rely to help you make good life decisions.

*“You will always miss 100% of the shots you don’t take.”*

—MICHAEL JORDAN

Cinzia and  
her mother



## Tips on Making Good Decisions

- **Discover your values:** The process of discovering who you are and what is important to you is a personal search that varies from individual to individual. Find things and people that make you happy and be confident in who you are and what you stand for.
- **Don't sweat the small stuff:** A bad exam grade, a broken relationship, or a lost friend—these are all things that would upset any one of us. Try not to lose focus of the bigger picture. Always put things into perspective and don't worry about the things that are out of your control.
- **Find a role model:** One of the best ways to ensure you make good life decisions is to find someone you truly respect and look up to. Ask yourself what they would do in the same situation. This can be a religious leader, a local figure, or even a family member. Try to pick someone who you value because of their actions and not money or fame.
- **Be positive:** Most importantly, try to always maintain a positive attitude and outlook, no matter what life throws at you. If you believe in yourself and your abilities, you will always be successful in life. Even when you come across a hardship, being positive will help you make the best of every situation.

## Be Proactive in Your Care

**M**OST PEOPLE TEND TO SPEND THEIR LIVES BEING reactive, waiting around to see what life tosses at them next. But not you...you are proactive!

To be proactive in life and in your healthcare means that you take an active part in the events that affect you and the decisions that shape your future. Though events will occur in life that may seem to be out of your control, the way you react to them is definitely within your power!

	Be Involved in Your Healthcare
	<p>Being personally involved in your healthcare will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▶ keep you well informed</li><li>▶ increase self awareness</li><li>▶ prevent future problems with your health</li><li>▶ help maintain your overall wellbeing</li></ul>

## How to be Proactive

- **Ask questions:** If you have a question for your doctor about something, don't be afraid to ask because you think it may be silly or obvious. The only bad question is the one you don't ask. Asking questions and being involved in your healthcare will help to build a stronger, personal bond with your physician.
- **Stay on track:** Make sure your medical history is always complete and up-to-date. It should include dates and information on your immunizations and current treatment. The forms included in Section II (Summaries and Reports) will help you keep your medical history up to date.
- **Perform self exams:** This is an essential part of being self aware and healthy.
  - **Women** should perform a self breast exam every month, a week after their period. Any lumps, abnormalities, or changes should immediately be reported to your health care provider. These monthly self exams are vital, so it is important not to forget or procrastinate. Women who have received radiation to the chest should be seen twice a year by a professional, in addition to performing their monthly exams.
  - **Men** should perform a monthly examination of their testicles to feel for any lumps or abnormalities. Contact your physician if something does not feel right.

## American Cancer Society Guidelines for Early Detection and Screening

**T**HE AMERICAN CANCER SOCIETY HAS STRESSED the importance of prevention and early detection of cancer in both men and women. Screening guidelines exist for colon and rectal, breast, cervical, prostate, and uterine cancer.

### Colon and Rectal Cancer

Beginning at age 50, both men and women at 'average risk' for colo-rectal cancer should have at least one of the following screening tests:

- Fecal occult blood test yearly
- Fecal immunochemical test yearly
- Fecal DNA test
- Flexible sigmoidoscopy every 5 years
- Colonoscopy every 10 years or earlier if any of the above tests are positive
  - Screening should begin at a younger age in subjects identified as 'high risk'
  - 'High risk' subjects are those with strong history, strong family history, or known family history of hereditary colo-rectal cancer or polyps

### Breast Cancer

Beginning at age 40, it is recommended that all women have the following screening tests:

- Mammogram yearly
- Clinical breast exam as part of a periodic health exam by a health care professional
  - Every 3 years for women in their 20's and 30's
  - Yearly for women in their 40's
- Regular breast self exams should begin in women in their 20's

- Women at 'high risk' (greater than 20% lifetime risk) should get an MRI and mammogram every year beginning at the age of 30. This includes women with:
  - A known BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation
  - A first-degree relative (parent, brother, sister, or child) with a BRCA1 or BRCA2 gene mutation
  - History of radiation therapy to the chest when they were between the ages of 10 and 30 years
  - Li-Fraumeni syndrome, Cowden syndrome, or Bannayan-Riley-Ruvalcaba syndrome, or one of these syndromes in first-degree relatives

## Cervical Cancer

All women should begin cervical cancer screening about 3 years after they begin having vaginal intercourse, but no later than when they are 21 years old.

- Screening should be done every year with the regular Pap test or every 2 years using the newer, liquid-based Pap test
- Beginning at age 30, women who have had 3 normal Pap test results in a row may get screened every 2 to 3 years
- Women with the following risk factors should be screened annually:
  - Diethylstilbestrol (DES) exposure before birth
  - HIV infection
  - A weakened immune system due to organ transplant, chemotherapy, or chronic steroid use
- Women who have had a total hysterectomy (removal of the uterus and cervix) may choose to stop having cervical cancer screening, unless the surgery was done as a treatment for cervical cancer or pre-cancer
- Women who have had a hysterectomy without removal of the cervix should continue to follow the guidelines above

## Uterine Cancer

At the time of menopause, all women should be informed about the risks and symptoms of endometrial cancer, and strongly encouraged to report any unexpected bleeding or spotting to their doctors.

- For women with or at high risk for hereditary non-polyposis colon cancer (HNPCC), annual screening should be offered for endometrial cancer with endometrial biopsy beginning at age 35

## Prostate Cancer

Both the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) blood test and digital rectal examination (DRE) should be offered annually, beginning at age 50, to men who have at least a 10-year life expectancy.

- Men at high risk (African-American men and men with a strong family history of one or more first-degree relatives [father, brothers] diagnosed before age 65) should begin testing at age 45
- Men at even higher risk, due to multiple first-degree relatives affected at an early age, should begin testing at age 40