

Navigating Your Cancer



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Welcome

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Your Cancer Journey with Albany Medical Center

Albany Medical Center's Dedication to Cancer Care

Our mission is to deliver excellence in patient care and improve the quality of life for our cancer patients through a commitment to multidisciplinary cancer care, standard practice guidelines, research, quality improvement, and community outreach and prevention.

Albany Medical Center's Standard of Excellence

We have been accredited by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) since 1938 and are proud to say that we are one of the oldest accredited sites in the country. We treat more than 2,700 new cancer patients every year and are known for our care in every type of cancer. The Cancer Committee at Albany Medical Center ensures that we participate in quality improvement projects and community programs. Our high level of excellence in patient care is how we have maintained our ACS certification for so many years.

Albany Medical Center's Cancer Program Providers

Our program offers surgical oncology, radiation oncology, and medical oncology services to patients with all types of cancer. We work within our institution and with community partners to provide multidisciplinary care including access to vascular interventional radiology, palliative care, genetic counseling, nutrition, and inpatient oncology nursing. We also have a dedicated oncology social worker who can help connect patients to local services such as rides to treatment, insurance, and local grants. In addition, our survivorship program can help you to the next step of your journey once your cancer treatment is complete.

Albany Medical Center's Academic Quality

We are dedicated to academic quality and integrity at Albany Medical Center. Our providers participate in multidisciplinary tumor boards for every type of cancer. We are actively involved in teaching the next generation of health care providers through medical student and resident teaching. We participate in research protocols that allow patients to receive leading-edge therapy through our institution and community oncology partners.

Choosing Albany Medical Center

We offer many unique services that are not available elsewhere in the Capital Region. Having the latest advanced treatments for cancer at Albany Med means not having to travel to other metropolitan areas like Boston or New York City. We are dedicated to making sure that all patients get the best therapies close to home.

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Understanding Your Cancer

What is cancer? Cancer is a group of cells in your body that divide out of control. Cancer cells can start any place in the body but can spread to different areas through the blood stream or lymph nodes. There are many different types of cancer.

How does cancer happen? Cancer can happen when the material within cells, DNA, is damaged or the normal way to stop cells from growing stops working. There are many different reasons a cell can become damaged including inherited causes, environmental factors, and for reasons scientists do not understand yet.

What does cancer stage mean? Cancer stage is the process that helps determine how far a cancer has spread. Determining your stage may involve imaging, tissue sampling, or laboratory testing. Each type of cancer has its own staging system, and this helps decide what type of treatment a patient may need. Staging systems look at the size of the tumor, whether any lymph nodes are involved, and whether this has spread to other parts of the body. A tumor to another part of the body is called a metastasis.

What treatment is best for me? Treatment is different for every person who has cancer. This may involve surgery, radiation, chemotherapy, hormone therapy, and targeted agents. These treatments can be used alone but more often they are used together for better success.

Who are the physicians that decide what treatment is right for me? There are various types of physicians who are involved in coming up with a treatment plan for your cancer. They work together as a team to decide treatment and surveillance after treatment is done. Please see below for a list of health care providers that may be involved in your care. Keep in mind that not all cancers need every specialty listed below.

Surgical oncologists perform any surgeries for your cancer. This could include a biopsy of your cancer, removal of your cancer and surrounding tissue, lymph node sampling, and port placement. There are many different types of surgical oncologists based on where the cancer is in the body. For example, a cancer of colon may be treated by a colorectal surgeon.

Radiation oncologists perform any radiation to your cancer. Radiation could be used to help shrink the cancer itself. It can also help other treatments be more successful by radiating tissue after your cancer has been removed or treated, or stop symptoms like bleeding or pain.

Medical oncologists determine the need for chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, or targeted agents in your cancer. This can include a treatment that goes through your veins, is injected into your skin, or is taken as a pill. These treatments can happen before or after surgery and radiation.

Plastic surgeons can help reconstruct an area that was damaged from cancer. This is sometimes performed as part of your treatment plan or done once your treatment is completed.

Interventional radiologists can help perform procedures that don't require being in the operating room. These procedures include less invasive tissue sampling, directed chemotherapy to an organ, port placement, and procedures to help treat symptoms of the disease.

Step Three

Your First Visit



Step 3: You were told you have cancer—now what?

It's normal to have many questions about your cancer. This list can help you prepare for your visit with your care team. Your doctor can provide answers to help you make important decisions about your care.

1. Exactly what kind of cancer do I have?
2. How do I get a copy of my pathology report?
3. How do I get a copy of my imaging?
4. Where is the cancer located in my body?
5. Has the cancer spread beyond where it started? yes/no
6. What is the cancer's stage? What does that mean?
7. What does my cancer stage mean for my treatment options and long-term outcome (prognosis)?
8. What are my chances of survival?
9. How much experience do you have treating this type of cancer?
10. Will I need other tests before we can decide on treatment?
11. What are my treatment choices?
12. What treatment do you recommend and why?
13. What is the goal of my treatment?
14. Should I think about genetic testing?
15. Should I get a second opinion? How do I do that?

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Your Support Team

Learning that you have been diagnosed with cancer can be overwhelming. Having a strong support system can help. At Albany Medical Center, we have programs and services available to address your physical, emotional, and social needs during every step of your cancer treatment. Your provider can connect you with these services.

Oncology Social Worker: Provides emotional support to patients and families, refers to local support groups, helps with transportation, health insurance, and financial issues, and links to community resources like food assistance and shelter.

Breast Nurse Navigator: Specializes in helping newly diagnosed breast cancer patients with follow-up appointments, breast imaging, lymphedema physical therapy, genetic testing, and financial assistance.

Meals to Heal Program: Partners with non-profit organization *Feed Albany* to deliver free prepared meals to the homes of in-need local patients currently undergoing cancer treatment.

Registered Dietitians: Provide dietary strategies for managing cancer treatment side effects and make evidence-based diet and lifestyle recommendations for cancer prevention and survivorship.

Speech Pathologist: Helps patients whose cancers involve the head and neck to maintain and improve their speech and swallowing abilities before, during, and after treatment.

Palliative and Supportive Care: Partners with oncology providers to maximize patients' quality of life by assisting with pain and symptom management, as well as navigating complex medical decisions.

Genetic Counselors: Evaluate patients with personal and family histories of cancer, offer, order, and interpret appropriate genetic tests, and help patients make informed decisions about cancer prevention and management.

Psychologists and Psychiatrists: Provide individual, group, and family psychotherapies and medication management for patients and loved ones experiencing anxiety, depression, and substance abuse.

Cancer Survivorship Program: Brings together oncology and primary care physicians, nurses, and social workers to provide specialized medical care and social support for patients who have completed their cancer treatment.

Step Five

Getting Additional Questions Answered



Albany Med Cancer Care

www.amc.edu/patient/services/cancer_care



Main Albany Med cancer care page, also contains introduction to your physician

Albany Med Route Finder

www.amc.yourdirectroute.com



Maps, walking directions, driving directions and parking locations at Albany Medical Center.

Albany Med Patient Bill of Rights

www.amc.edu/patient/patient_guide/upload/1449-2.pdf



Form of your rights as a patient of a New York State Hospital.

American Cancer Society

www.cancer.org



A nationwide, community-based organization dedicated to saving lives, celebrating lives, and leading the fight for a world without cancer.

American Cancer Society Hope Club

www.cancer.org/about-us/local/new-york/hope-club



Support community for anyone whose life has been touched by cancer.

American Institute for Cancer Research

www.aicr.org



Resources for survivors.

American Society of Clinical Oncology: Cancer.net

www.cancer.net/survivorship



Information and resources for cancer survivors and their friends and family.

Cancer Support Community

www.cancersupportcommunity.org



Nonprofit network that offers support for people impacted by cancer.

GW Patient Toolkit

www.smhs.gwu.edu/gwci/survivorship/ncsrc/national-cancer-survivorship-center-toolkit



Can help you or your loved one talk to your doctor, coordinate your care and learn about the care you need.

National Comprehensive Cancer Network Glossary of Terms

www.nccn.org/icl



Dictionary of terms that may be used throughout your treatment.

National Comprehensive Cancer Network Guidelines

www.nccn.org/patient-resources/guidelines-for-patients



Information about different cancer types and treatment.

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Cancer Survivorship Program

What is survivorship?

Cancer Survivorship is more than surviving cancer. It starts from the time of diagnosis, continues after treatment, and includes family, friends and caregivers. We created the Cancer Survivorship Program to offer follow-up options that are accessible and comprehensive.

What kind of follow-up care do I need after my treatment ends?

Your oncology team will work with you to plan follow-up appointments to monitor your progress. This may include regular imaging (such as CT scan, MRI, or ultrasound) or blood tests. If you have a specific location where you prefer to have these tests done, let your doctor know. You may receive a Survivorship Care Plan that summarizes the cancer treatment you had and outlines your surveillance plan.

How do I get help with the side effects of treatment?

Although some cancer treatments can cause long-term side effects, Albany Medical Center's elite group of experts is available to help. Our providers offer nutritional counseling, lymphedema care and physical therapy, swallowing therapy, and much more.

How does my primary care doctor fit in?

After cancer treatment, it's important to continue regular medical care with your primary care provider. This includes annual physical exams, preventative care like vaccinations, and cancer screenings like colonoscopies. Through the Cancer Survivorship Program, Albany Med providers can help coordinate your medical care between your oncology team and your primary care provider.

What kind of support is there for me as a survivor?

Being a cancer survivor brings unique emotional and social challenges. Readjusting to life after cancer—at home and at work—can take time. Our cancer survivorship social worker can refer you to local support groups and counselors who can help you cope with this new transition.

Local Cancer Resources

American Cancer Society Hope Club

1 Penny Lane, Latham
(518) 220-6960

- Support groups for patients, loved ones, and those grieving
- Gentle yoga, reiki, and community lunches
- Educational events

To Life! Breast Cancer Support

410 Kenwood Avenue, Delmar
110 Spring Street, Saratoga Springs
Delmar: (518) 439-5975
Saratoga: (518) 587-3820

- Support groups for breast cancer patients
- Private boutique and fitting services for wigs, scarves, and mastectomy products
- Educational events

Cancer Support at Saratoga Hospital

211 Church Street, Saratoga Springs
(518) 886-5648

- Support groups for patients, loved ones, and those grieving

Oncology Support Program

80 Mary's Avenue, Kingston
(845) 339-2071

- Support groups for patients, loved ones, and those grieving
- Exercise and wellness programs
- Educational events

Capital District YMCA LIVESTRONG® Program

(518) 731-7529 x 1640

This no cost, 12-week program meets twice a week, using traditional and holistic exercise methods to ease cancer survivors back into fitness and help maintain a healthy life.

**Rudy A. Cittotti Family Recreation Center
Cancer Fitness Program**

30 Aviation Road, Albany
(518) 867-8920

This no-cost, 8-week cancer fitness program helps patients and survivors improve muscle function and range of motion, reduce fatigue, and manage other cancer treatment considerations. It includes an individualized exercise plan, two 60-minute group workout sessions per week, and unlimited full access to the recreation center.

Find links to all the resources above by visiting amc.edu/cancerresources





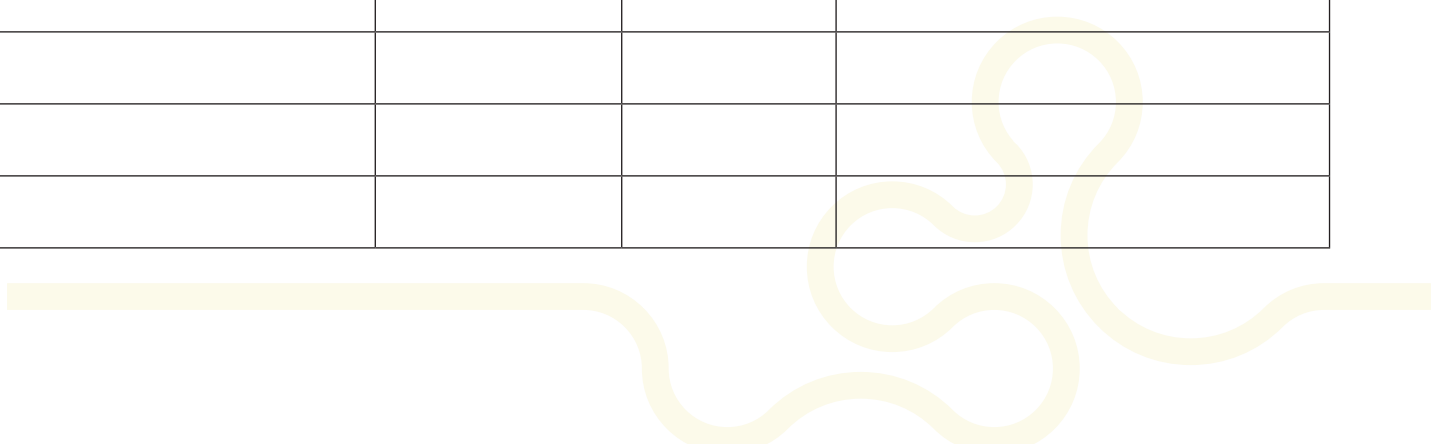
Health Care Provider Phone Numbers

Health Care Provider	Name	Phone Number
Primary Care Doctor		
Medical Oncologist		
Radiation Oncologist		
Pharmacy		



Appointment List

Appointment	Date	Time	Comment





Notes

Notes

