



Anxiety and Depression & Cancer Survivorship

What we know about Anxiety & Depression:

Survivors of cancer treatment are at especially high risk for anxiety and depression due to the multiple stressors, vulnerabilities, and challenges they face. Most commonly, there is a fear of the cancer returning, and this leads to anxiety related to surveillance and any physical symptoms that may or may not be related to the cancer diagnosis. Unpredictable events and outcomes can lead to anxiety and depression, especially at times of transition, surveillance, significant loss, major life events and social isolation.

The good news is that anxiety and depression are treatable.

Screening Questions:

1. Do you often feel nervous or do you worry?
2. Do you often feel sad or depressed?
3. Have you lost interest in things you used to enjoy?

Some of the most stressful points in time for cancer survivors are:

- During active surveillance
- When new symptoms or findings are suggestive of a cancer recurrence
- Distress related to body image
- Transition periods, such as:
 - Awaiting treatment
 - Change in treatment modality
 - Less frequent visits to your oncologist due to treatment completion
 - Progression or Recurrence of cancer
 - Treatment failure
 - Termination of treatment/End of life care

Social factors may also contribute to anxiety and depression, such as:

- Social isolation
- Family and caregiver conflicts
- Financial burden/Limited insurance coverage
- Younger age/Lack of peers
- History of abuse
- Limited access to medical care
- Employment concerns
 - Fear of losing health benefits/steady income
 - Discrimination in work place because of cancer diagnosis

Anxiety & Depression are common, treatable conditions. As part of your treatment plan, it may be suggested you try:

- ❖ Social work counseling
- ❖ Cognitive behavioral therapy
- ❖ Medications, such as:
 - Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's)
 - Benzodiazepines
 - Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRI's)

