

**PATIENT GUIDE**

# Survivorship Care Plan

This Patient Guide provides an overview of survivorship, the Survivorship Care Plan and frequently asked questions in relation to this. It is important to note that this is a guide only and survivorship and survivorship care plans should be discussed with and completed in collaboration with your treating doctor, to ensure it is tailored to your specific needs.

## What is Survivorship?

Survivorship is described differently by different sources. Some suggest survivorship starts at the time of a melanoma diagnosis and continues for the rest of the person's life. Others refer to survivorship starting when melanoma treatment is complete.

What is agreed on is that melanoma survivors can experience a range of:

- Physical concerns
- Social concerns
- Emotional concerns

## Physical Concerns

Melanoma survivors may experience side effects that are acute (resolve over time) or long-term. Side effects can occur whilst on treatment, soon after treatment ends or long after treatment ends.

It is important to note that different melanoma treatments can have different side effects.

Common physical concerns experienced by melanoma survivors may include:

- Fatigue
- Changes in body weight
- Eating and drinking difficulties
- Fertility issues
- Trouble with thinking and memory
- Concerns about sex and intimacy
- Lymphedema
- Menopause
- Pain
- Sleep issues

## **Social Concerns**

Common social concerns experienced by melanoma survivors:

- Financial troubles
- Returning to work or study
- Not being able to do usual things

## **Emotional Concerns**

Common emotional concerns experienced by melanoma survivors:

- Stress
- Anxiety + depression
- Fear of cancer recurrence or progression
- Feeling uncertain about the future

## **Survivorship Care**

Survivorship care should focus on:

- The health and wellbeing of a person living with or beyond cancer
- Addressing the physical, social and emotional issues experienced

## **What is a Survivorship Care Plan?**

A Survivorship Care Plan (SCP) is a document prepared for you in collaboration with your treating team at the end of your melanoma treatment. The aim of a SCP is to help optimize your health and wellbeing as well as practical ways to coordinate care between your treatment team, yourself and other health care professionals once treatment has finished.

A SCP provides a useful summary of your treatment, sets out a clear schedule for follow-up appointments and screening tests, list any symptoms to watch out for and possible long-term side effects, identifies your physical, emotional, psychological or social needs after treatment and ways to manage them, explain the roles and responsibilities of different members of your health care team and who to contact if you are worried and suggests ways to adopt a healthy lifestyle after treatment.

## Survivorship Care Plan comprises of:

### A treatment summary

- Can be used by health professionals as well as consumers
- Should include:
  - Diagnosis information—including date of diagnosis, subtype of melanoma, melanoma characteristics including site, stage, size, nodes, genetic mutations, pathology findings etc
  - Treatment history
  - Persistent symptoms or side effects at completion of treatment
  - Genetic or hereditary risk factors
  - Supportive services provided during treatment Including any psychological support

### A follow-up plan

- Sets out a clear schedule for follow-up appointments and screening tests, including contact details for the health professionals involved in treatment and ongoing care
- Lists any symptoms to watch out for and possible long-term side effects

### A post-treatment care plan

- Identifies medical, emotional, psychological or social needs after treatment and ways to manage them
- Describes practical aspects of rehabilitation that may be required and ways to manage concerns
- Suggests ways to adopt a healthy lifestyle after treatment

## Benefits of having a Survivorship Care Plan?

When active treatment for melanoma ends, it is helpful to keep a record of the treatment you received and the follow up care recommended by your doctor. A SCP can help improve communication between you, your family and all the health professionals involved in your care. A SCP can also set out ways to live a healthy lifestyle post treatment to optimize your wellness and reduce the risk of melanoma recurrence as well as strategies to help with your emotional and social wellbeing.

## Who is involved in a Survivorship Care Plan?

Usually your treating doctor (oncologist) and your cancer nurse coordinator (if applicable) will work together with you to create your SCP. Other medical professionals may be involved if they have been part of your care such as other specialty doctors, physiotherapist, dietician, exercise physiologist, psychologist or social worker. It is essential that you discuss your specific social, physical and emotional needs so that the SCP fits with your unique situation. It is strongly recommended that you are involved in the development process.

## Format

SCP's may be paper-based, electronic or web-based. They may be individually prepared or healthcare providers may use their own template.

## Storing the Survivorship Care Plan

You should receive a copy, a copy should be provided to your GP and your treating team should keep a copy.

## Reviewing and updating the Survivorship Care Plan

The SCP should be a dynamic document regularly updated to reflect milestones and key changes in the post treatment phase as well as the changing needs and priorities of patients. These plans should be revisited with you at subsequent visits and in response to changes in need.

## How can I get a Survivorship Care Plan?

If you have not been given a SCP at the end of treatment, ask your treatment team if they can prepare one. Another option is to develop your own plan and review it with your treatment team.

The Australian Survivorship Cancer Centre (ASCC) provides a template you can download and fill out. The Australian Survivorship Cancer Centre can be found on: [www.petermac.org/patients-and-carers/support-and-wellbeing/life-after-treatment](http://www.petermac.org/patients-and-carers/support-and-wellbeing/life-after-treatment). Visit the [Resources page](#) on their website and search for "Survivorship Care Plan template".

The American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) Cancer Treatment Plan also provides a basic template. The ASCO Survivorship Care Plan can be found on <https://www.asco.org/news-initiatives/current-initiatives/cancer-care-initiatives/prevention-survivorship/survivorship-compendium/care-planning>.

***These forms are not intended to provide a complete medical record. No single treatment or survivorship care plan is appropriate for all patients due to the complexity of cancer care. Talk with your doctor for more information about your individual treatment and follow-up care. Use the ASCC Survivorship Care Plan or the ASCO Survivorship Care Plan with the guidance of your doctor.***

## Getting Support

If you would like any further information about a Survivorship Care Plan or require support and information to help you with other related concerns, please contact the Melanoma Patients Australia Melanoma Support line on 1300 88 44 50.

## Connecting with Melanoma Patients Australia Support Programs

Melanoma Support Line 1300 88 44 50

Connect with other patients through [Melanoma Patients Peer Support Programs](#) via the website

Connect with [Melanoma Patients Australia Melanoma Telehealth Nurse](#)

The information contained in this resource is intended to be a guide. Every patient is different and will have different experiences, the information contained in this resource will not apply to all patients. This information is not aimed specifically to an individual and it is therefore important that patients always consult their specialist doctor or other medical professional (e.g., General Practitioner) about any specific matters affecting their individual treatment and care. The information in this guide is not intended to replace medical information or substitute the formal professional advice or your supportive care team. Melanoma Patients Australia exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damager incurred by using or relying on the information provided in this resource.

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