



## Living With Metastatic Cancer

Metastatic cancer is when cancer spreads to other areas of the body from the original site. For example, lung cancer that has spread to the liver is called metastatic lung cancer.

Metastatic cancer means something different to each person that hears those words and what this means for prognosis is no different. Advances in therapies allow some cancers to become a chronic illness, with people surviving for many years on and off therapy. For others, time may be much more limited. But this does not mean you cannot aim for the best possible quality of life while living as fully as possible.

When you learn you have metastatic cancer, you may have many questions and feelings like

- How can do I cope with this news?
- How will my family handle it?
- Can I work- and how can I afford not to?
- What do I do now?

You may feel disappointed, sad, scared, shocked, angry, overwhelmed, and out of control. Ask for help and support- from social workers, therapists, and support groups (in person or online). Family, friends, and clergy can be great sources of support during cancer treatment.

If you have been through cancer treatment before, keep in mind that you know much more now than you did at the time of your original diagnosis. Use that knowledge to guide your treatment decisions and help you put into place the support you need to get through this battle.

If you are newly diagnosed with cancer that is discovered to be metastatic, call on your people to help you research treatment options, weigh the pros and cons, and make decisions. Bring your support person(s) to your appointments to take notes and help you recall what was discussed when you get home.

Hope exists even when what was originally hoped for is not likely to happen. Focus on achievable daily goals, such as attending a child's soccer game or lunch with a friend. This may help you appreciate the "little" treats in life and keep you focused on the good things. Some survivors like to set a long-term goal or milestone, such as seeing the birth of a grandchild. Save your energy to spend doing things you enjoy. Be realistic in your goals, accept that you won't always be up for the task, and may need to adjust your goals for the day based on how you feel. Don't be afraid to ask for help when needed.

Metastatic cancer can be a challenging part of the cancer journey. It may be hard at times to remember that you have a lot to live for, but try not to let the cancer keep you down. Don't let it keep you from moving forward, enjoying life, and spending time with loved ones. Live each day as best you can and realize some days will be better than others.

## Resources for More Information

- ACS resource, [Understanding Advanced and Metastatic Cancer](#)
- NCI booklet [Coping with Advanced Cancer](#)

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