

Cancer Rehabilitation

Cancer and its treatments can cause a multitude of problems that may affect daily life. Examples of such problems include: fatigue, joint pains, memory problems, and hand or leg numbness, amongst many others. Although the types and severity of problems differ from person to person, they can make it harder for you to get back to your normal life and job, whether during or after cancer treatment. Cancer rehabilitation helps people with cancer to prevent and address these problems, with the aim of maximizing their independence, resuming their life roles as much as possible, and improving their quality of life.



How can Cancer Rehabilitation help?

Cancer rehabilitation can help to address the following problems, regardless of the type and stage of your cancer and treatment:

- Fatigue
- Moving around (e.g. climbing stairs, walking)
- Numbness or tingling in the hands or feet
- Joint pains and muscle aches
- Sexual problems
- Swelling in the limbs
- Weakness and loss of strength
- Problems with attention, thinking and memory
- Problems with swallowing

In a cancer rehabilitation program, rehabilitation specialists (including doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, and dietitians) work together to develop a personalized rehabilitation plan based on your needs and goals. Participating in cancer rehabilitation may bring about one of more of the following benefits:

- Faster recovery from side effects of cancer and its treatment
- Improved general health and wellbeing
- Reduced distress and anxiety
- Improved mobility and strength
- Improved comfort, confidence and self-esteem
- Improved ability in carrying out daily activities
- Improved quality of life

What can I expect during my first Cancer Rehabilitation appointment?

Your first visit to the cancer rehabilitation clinic will typically involve detailed history taking, clinical examinations and health surveys to assess your difficulties and concerns. The detailed assessment allows the rehabilitation team to be more focused in managing your problems, and sets the basis for your own physical and functional rehabilitation goals to achieve during your cancer journey.

Your cancer rehabilitation physician, who specializes in the diagnosis and treatment of the physical effects that may result from cancer and its treatments, may initiate referrals to different allied health staff (e.g. physiotherapist, occupational therapist, speech therapist, medical social workers, psychologist, dietitian) based on the results of your assessment. You will then be prescribed with exercises based on your body and health condition, to improve your physical endurance, strength, flexibility, balance, as well as any symptoms (e.g. fatigue, joint pains, weakness) that you may have.

When should I get Cancer Rehabilitation?

If you encounter any of the problems listed above, or if you notice that symptoms from cancer and its treatment are causing difficulties in performing daily tasks, please discuss with your doctor or nurse about seeing a cancer rehabilitation professional. As many of the problems can worsen over time, it is advised to address them early.

If you have any questions regarding the above, please call Cancer Helpline at **+65 6225 5655** or approach your doctor or nurse for further details.

Useful Readings

- Singapore Cancer Society: Join a Cancer Rehabilitation Programme:
<https://www.singaporecancersociety.org.sg/get-help/cancer-patient/join-a-cancer-rehabilitation-programme.html>
- Straits Times: How Cancer Rehab can help survivors
<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/how-cancer-rehab-can-help-survivors>

The above contents are made available as part of TEMASEK FOUNDATION-ACCESS (Accessible Cancer Care to Enable Support for Survivors) PROGRAMME, a holistic care programme to support cancer patients during their care and recovery journey.

The contents have been approved by the Cancer Education Information Service, National Cancer Centre Singapore (NCCS), for people with cancer and their families and caregivers. However, this information serves only as a guide and should not be used as a substitute for medical diagnosis, treatment or advice. For specific medical conditions, please seek expert medical advice from your healthcare team.

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