

Survivor Steps

Cancer Rehab and Recovery

Frequently Asked Questions

Cancer treatments can be very debilitating and may cause you significant pain, fatigue and disability. Through the Survivor Steps program, our goal is to minimize these effects and to encourage you to have the best quality of life possible. Below are some frequently asked questions to help you learn more about cancer rehabilitation and Kaleida Health's Survivor Steps Program.

1. What is the Survivor Steps Program?

Survivor Steps provides you with coordinated cancer rehabilitation supported by a team of specially trained cancer rehab clinicians, including physical, occupational and speech therapists. Our program also offers lymphedema surveillance and treatment, which is provided by lymphedema certified physical therapists. As a Survivor Steps patient, you will receive individualized, comprehensive cancer rehabilitation treatment to improve the symptoms affecting your daily functioning and quality of life. Education is also an important component of Survivor Steps. A nurse navigator is available to answer your questions and best direct you to the necessary resources. Referrals to dietitians and mental health professionals are made as needed.

2. What is cancer rehabilitation?

Cancer rehabilitation is medical treatment that helps improve specific problems that may be caused by cancer or the therapies used to treat cancer. Rehabilitation is designed to improve your ability to function as well as possible. This means that the Survivor Steps program can help you experience less pain, fatigue and improved physical mobility, leading to faster emotional recovery.

3. What impairments can be addressed through cancer rehabilitation?

Rehabilitation professionals can help you with a wide variety of treatment-related conditions and their symptoms, including pain, weakness, fatigue, shoulder problems, balance and gait problems, memory and concentration issues, swallowing and speech problems and lymphedema.

4. Am I a candidate for cancer rehabilitation?

If you have any problems that you didn't have before your diagnosis, especially if they interfere with your ability to function or quality of life, you are a candidate for cancer rehabilitation.

5. Will my insurance cover cancer rehabilitation?

Cancer rehabilitation services are reimbursed by insurance providers most often by a number of allowable visits per year. Check your individual insurance specifically for physical, occupational and speech rehabilitation benefits.

6. How can I receive more information about Kaleida Health's Survivor Steps Program?

For additional information, call (716) 568-3511. A provider referral is needed before therapies can begin.

Buffalo Therapy Service Locations:

705 Maple Road
Williamsville, NY 14221
(716) 580-7360

DeGraff Memorial Hospital
445 Tremont Street
North Tonawanda, NY 14120
(716) 690-2031



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Three Steps Forward: Benefits of Survivorship Services

A key component of comprehensive survivorship services is multidisciplinary cancer rehabilitation care that can help survivors improve their ability to function and quality of life. Regardless of the stage of cancer or phase of treatment or recovery, survivors can benefit from participation in an evidence-based rehabilitation program.

Three common and disabling diagnoses that improve with rehabilitation offered by cancer rehab therapists are:

1. Reduce Pain

Unfortunately, many cancer survivors are burdened with pain. The symptoms of pain may be from tissue damage, from the cancer or from the associated treatments.

Types of pain include the following:

- Cancer induced peripheral neuropathy (paresthesia – pins and needles, dysesthesia – pain and burning)
- Post operative pain
- Bone pain
- Myalgia (muscle pain)
- Althalgial (joint pain)
- Brachial Plexopathy (lack of movement/feeling in the arm and shoulder)
- Axillary Webbing (distal arm pain, limited movement of the shoulder)

The Survivor Steps cancer rehab team is experienced at evaluating and treating each of these pain issues with an individualized plan of care.

2. Reduce Fatigue

Cancer-related fatigue (CRF) is one of the most common and disabling problems that cancer survivors face. Research demonstrates exercise as an intervention for CRF. However, for cancer survivors who have impairments, it is important to be referred for rehabilitation therapy consultations rather than group exercise classes.

The Survivor Steps rehab team will evaluate the symptom of fatigue and work to improve endurance through a prescribed therapeutic exercise program.

3. Improve Cognitive Function

Many cancer survivors report that they have “chemo brain” or mild cognitive impairment (MCI).

Neurocognitive rehabilitation interventions, for example in patients with post-concussive syndromes, have been well studied. Neurocognitive rehabilitation often includes helping people to decrease their level of disability by using various strategies to assist with focus, concentration, attention, memory and organizational skills. Many cancer survivors find referrals to the Survivor Steps speech-language pathologists and occupational therapists enormously helpful for “chemo brain.”

