

Coping with Advanced Non-Melanoma Skin Cancer Diagnoses: A Guide for Patients and Caregivers

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Introduction

Receiving a diagnosis of advanced non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) can be a very emotional and stressful experience. Here are some key ways to cope with a diagnosis of advanced NMSC and take care of yourself.

Building A Support System

A strong support system can be essential in your journey. It is best to build up a strong support system or involve your existing support network in your care early on. You could ask family and friends to accompany you to appointments, help you with daily activities like chores or cooking meals, and also provide emotional support. You might need various types of support at different stages.

Additionally, you can ask your health care team to connect you with others who can help you navigate the healthcare system, such as with financial resources, social services, scheduling appointments, and coordinating care. People that can help with these tasks are a social worker, patient navigator, and a financial counselor.

Ask your health care team for more resources for support as well that you can either take home with you to review later, like pamphlets, or websites that you can look at later online. Our website (<https://scout.connectedcommunity.org/home>), American Cancer Society (cancer.org), American Cancer Society of Clinical Oncology (asco.org), Skin Cancer Foundation (SkinCancer.org), and the National Comprehensive Cancer Network (nccn.org/patientresources/patient-resources/guidelines-for-patients) are among some websites

that you can look at for more information and resources. This can help reinforce the information discussed during your visit and provide more support.

Additional Resources for Emotional Support

A diagnosis of NMSC can come with a heavy emotional burden. It is common to feel a range of emotions, including fear, anxiety, and depression, and these feelings should be addressed in an understanding way. It is good to talk to your healthcare team about what you are feeling, so that they can best support you.

Support groups can be an excellent way to gain community, support, and information. You can join our Skin Cancer Champions community (<https://scout.connectedcommunity.org/home>), along with other cancer support groups like Cancer Care (cancercare.org) or the Cancer Support Community (cancersupportcommunity.org), in order to connect to those who also have advanced NMSC.

You may also ask to be referred to mental health professionals if needed, such as therapists, psychologists, or counselors.

Setting Self-Care Goals

Setting achievable goals and doing activities that bring you joy and fulfillment can help you feel better mentally and physically. Try your best to get enough rest in order to take care of your body. You can also work with your healthcare team, specifically a nutritionist or dietician, to have a balanced and healthy diet, incorporating foods like vegetables, fruits, and protein.

Regular physical activity like going for a walk or doing yoga when possible can greatly improve your health. Adjust your physical activity to what you feel comfortable doing based on your current health and condition.

Other activities that you might want to do to reduce stress and improve overall well-being include meditating, watching a fun movie, gardening, or spending time with loved ones and friends.

Continue Follow-Up

Go to regular follow-up appointments with your physician to discuss your progress and any emotions, concerns, or adjustments that you would like. Make sure to reach your physician or another member of your healthcare team with any questions or urgent symptoms and issues that come up.

Coping for Caregivers

If you are a caregiver for someone with an advanced diagnosis of NMSC, you can provide support in many different ways, including the methods listed above.

Being a caregiver is a key role in your loved one's life. However, make sure to also take care of your own wellbeing as well, so that you can best take care of your loved one as well. Try to take breaks when needed, relax, and do whatever activities or hobbies that bring you joy.

Resources

1. Skin Cancer Champions - www.scout.connectedcommunity.org/home
2. Cancer Care - www.cancercare.org
3. Cancer Support Community - www.cancersupportcommunity.org
4. American Cancer Society - www.cancer.org
5. American Cancer Society of Clinical Oncology - www.asco.org
6. Skin Cancer Foundation - www.SkinCancer.org
7. National Comprehensive Cancer Network - nccn.org/patientresources/patient-resources/guidelines-for-patients
8. Merkelcell.org - www.Merkelcell.org
9. Patient Advocate Foundation - www.PatientAdvocate.org
10. Cancer Support Helpline - 888-793-9355
11. MyLifeLine - www.MyLifeLine.org