Article Series Preparing for Appointments All

Heart Health and Cancer Care

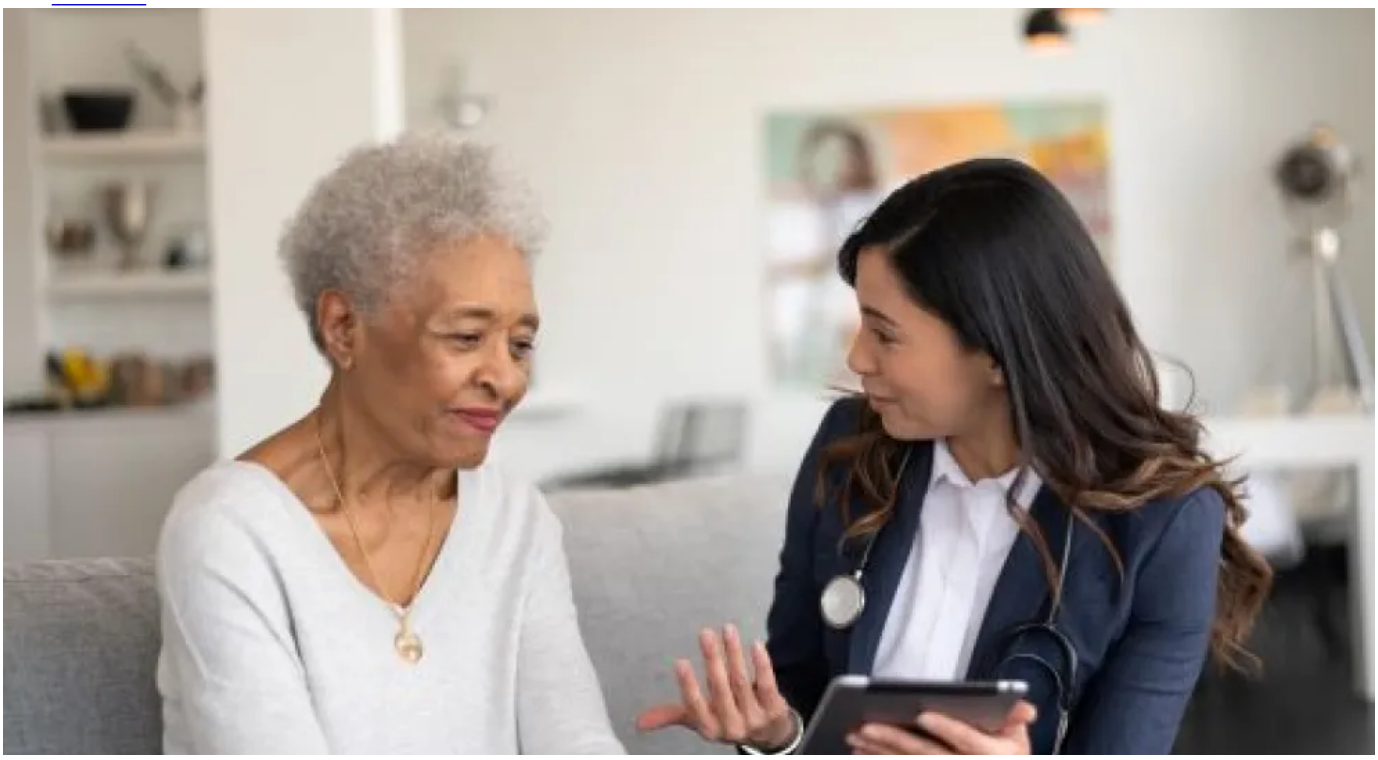
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A cancer diagnosis can feel overwhelming, and it is easy to lose sight of your overall health needs. Ways you can manage your overall health include staying on top of your other healthcare needs and maintaining ongoing relationships with your care team.

By maintaining your health throughout your cancer care, you may reduce the chance of developing new conditions. In addition, keeping up with your health could potentially prevent any new conditions by knowing the signs and symptoms of side

effects from your treatment. It is important to let your healthcare team know as soon as you notice any new or worsening issues.

One way to maintain overall health includes keeping up with healthy habits, such as eating well and getting enough sleep. Healthy habits have many benefits for people with cancer, including improved energy levels and better ability to fight infection and cope with potential side effects of treatment. Another way to maintain overall health is through routine check-ups with a member of your healthcare team. You may have healthcare providers beyond your oncologist, such as your primary care physician, a cardiologist or a nurse practitioner, that help manage your health concerns. They may not treat cancer specifically, but they can play an active role in managing your care, especially when it comes to evaluating new symptoms, offering psychosocial support, and managing chronic pain and co-existing conditions.

When managing and preventing health conditions other than your cancer, it can be vital to check the heart. People with cancer have a higher risk of developing heart disease and other heart problems due to factors like cancer itself, or side effects of certain cancer treatments. Therefore, people with cancer should prioritize their heart health, even if they do not necessarily have symptoms. When trying to lessen the risk of heart problems, some factors may be out of your control, such as family history. But there are factors that you can control, such as lifestyle changes, to maintain or improve your heart health.

In taking care of your heart, you may have improved cancer outcomes and can potentially reduce the chance that your cancer treatment will need to be paused because of a heart problem. Learn more about some steps you can take here.

To learn about your risk for heart disease, talk to your healthcare team about testing options. When you go to a doctor, he or she may do any or all of the following:

- Ask about your history with heart problems
- Ask about your history of cancer treatments
- Ask about other considerations, like your lifestyle or other health conditions you may have
- Test your blood pressure, blood sugar, and cholesterol
- Test your blood for levels of certain proteins that may indicate heart problems
- Perform an electrocardiogram, which measures the heart’s electrical activity

- Perform an echocardiogram, which takes an image of the heart and measures its function

Remember that each person’s cancer journey is unique, and so is their health. Even though you have cancer, it is important that your overall health, particularly your heart health, remains a priority and is the subject of an ongoing discussion with your healthcare team.