

Young Adults and Cancer



A cancer diagnosis during young adulthood brings unique challenges. Individuals between the ages of 15 and 39 are navigating critical life stages – including education, careers, relationships and starting families – when cancer suddenly disrupts their path. Beyond medical treatment, young adults often face emotional isolation, financial strain, fertility concerns and a lack of age-appropriate support. Recognizing and addressing these unique needs is essential to helping young adults not only survive, but thrive, during and after their cancer journey.

Emotional support

Facing cancer as a young adult can feel isolating. Connecting with support groups, counselors, or peer mentors provides community, coping skills and hope – helping you navigate the emotional ups and downs of your cancer journey.

- **Stupid Cancer**
Offers online community meetups, conferences and mental health workshops tailored to young adults facing cancer.
StupidCancer.org
- **CancerCare**
Provides free counseling (phone and online), support groups, educational workshops and financial assistance specifically for young adults.
CancerCare.org/tagged/young_adults
- **Cactus Cancer Society**
Provides a safe space where young adults (ages 18-45) facing cancer can connect, cope and thrive with one another in an online community through creativity and expression. Offerings include creative writing workshops, journaling groups, peer support groups and mental health programs designed for young adult survivors.
CactusCancer.org

- **Elephants and Tea**
A magazine and online platform where young adult cancer patients and survivors share their stories. Also hosts virtual meetups and writing workshops.
ElephantsAndTea.org
- **Imerman Angels**
One-on-one peer support by matching young adults with cancer survivors or caregivers who have gone through similar experiences.
ImermanAngels.org
- **GRYT Health**
A virtual community for young adult cancer patients, offering mental health chats, virtual meetups and educational sessions.
GRYThealth.com
- **Ulman Foundation**
Has in-person and virtual support groups, peer navigation services and a strong focus on building community among young adult patients and survivors.
UlmanFoundation.org

Experiences and wish granting

Special experiences and memory-making opportunities can offer emotional relief, empowerment and connection during treatment. Wish-granting programs help young adults focus on moments of joy and healing beyond their diagnosis.

- **Live For Today**

A local non-profit who provides unforgettable life experience for young adults with cancer. Provides monthly events to help foster peer connection and support.

Live-For-Today.org

- **First Descents**

Offers free outdoor adventure programs (like kayaking and climbing) that foster community, resilience and emotional healing for young adults with cancer.

FirstDescents.org

- **Dear Jack Foundation**

Provides a positive life experience to help young adults (ages 18-39) to take their minds off cancer.

DearJackFoundation.org/programs/lifelist

- **Dream Foundation**

Fulfills dreams that provide inspiration, comfort and closure. Must be over the age of 18 and with a life expectancy of one year or less.

DreamFoundation.org

- **Stella's Wish Foundation**

Fulfills a wish to young adults who have been diagnosed with Stage IV cancer.

StellasWish.org



Intimacy and relationships

Cancer can impact intimacy, dating and family planning. Young adults may face concerns about body image, relationships and fertility options. Talking openly and accessing supportive resources can help you navigate these sensitive areas with confidence.

- **National Cancer Institute**

Article about the impact of cancer on your self-image and sexuality and provides ideas on how to cope and address the changes.

Cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/self-image

- **American Cancer Society**

A great resource that provides educational information on a variety of intimacy related concerns that can occur during cancer treatment.

Cancer.org/cancer/managing-cancer/side-effects/sexual-side-effects/how-cancer-affects-sexuality

- **Baptist MD Anderson's Sexual Health Clinics**

The sexual health clinics at Baptist MD Anderson provide a safe space to discuss any sexual health issues you are experiencing or questions you may have regarding achieving a satisfying sex life.

Women's Sexual Health:

BaptistMDAnderson.com/patients-and-families/womens-sexual-health

Men's Sexual Health:

BaptistMDAnderson.com/patients-and-families/mens-sexual-health

Fertility

Cancer treatments like chemotherapy, radiation and surgery can affect future fertility. For young adults, preserving the option to have biological children later can be an important part of healing and planning for the future.

Preservation services:

- **Livestrong Fertility**

Has a variety of educational resources regarding fertility options following a cancer diagnosis.

LiveStrong.org

- **Save My Fertility**

Provides patients information needed to have a more comprehensive discussion with their doctors about fertility preservation.

SaveMyFertility.org/pocket-guides/patients

- **Florida Institute for Reproductive Medicine**
Largest infertility clinic in the area specializing in fertility services. Offers discounted services for oncology patients.
FertilityJacksonville.com

Financial assistance resources:

- **The Samfund-Family Building Grant**
Applicants must be between the ages of 21-39 and have completed their cancer treatments. Funds can be used to assist with harvesting of eggs/embryos, services associated with IVF or IUI, surrogacy fees, fertility testing or adoption costs.

ExpectMiraclesFoundation.org/financial-assistance-grant/

- **Livestrong Fertility Financial Assistance**
Offers a discount program with clinics located throughout the U.S. to help lower the cost of fertility treatments.

Livestrong.org/how-we-help/livestrong-fertility

- **Verna's Purse**
Financial assistance towards the storage of oocytes, ovarian tissue, semen, testicular tissue or embryos.

ReproTech.com/vernas-purse

- **Team Maggie's Dream**
Offers grants to help subsidize the cost of egg or sperm preservation.

TeamMaggiesDream.org

Cancer and education

A cancer diagnosis can interrupt education plans, whether you're in high school, college, or graduate school. There are resources available to support academic accommodations, scholarships and continuing education during and after treatment.

- **Cancer and Careers**
Guides on returning to school, managing side effects while studying and disclosing your diagnosis to professors or administrators.

CancerAndCareers.org

- **Triage Cancer**
Free information on school rights, academic accommodation (e.g., under Section 504 and the ADA) and health insurance for student survivors.

TriageCancer.org



- **College and University Disability Services**
Every accredited school in the U.S. has an office to help students with medical conditions access accommodations (e.g., extended time, attendance flexibility, note-taking support). Connecting early with the disability offices is key to ensuring that accommodations are in place before classes begin.

Scholarships options:

- **Cancer for College**
Provides a variety of academic scholarships, medical debt relief and educational experiences for cancer survivors.
CancerForCollege.org
- **National Collegiate Cancer Foundation**
Has scholarship opportunities for cancer survivors between the ages of 18-35.
CollegiateCancer.org
- **My Hometown Heroes**
Scholarships are available to cancer survivors (ages 17-39) who have plans to enroll at a university, community college or trade school.
MyHometownHeroes.org
- **The Nicki Leach Foundation**
Has a partnership with the University of North Florida to offer scholarships to young adult cancer survivors.
NickiLeach.org

Working with cancer

Managing a career during or after cancer treatment can be overwhelming. Young adults often face challenges around taking time off, workplace rights and returning to work. Resources are available to help you navigate job protections, career changes and financial support, empowering you to balance health, work and future goals.

- **Cancer and Careers**

Guides on how to manage work during and after treatment, disclosure rights and workplace accommodations. Offers career coaching, resume reviews, legal resources and a free online Career Coach toolkit.

CancerandCareers.org

- **Triage Cancer**

Free education on legal and practical issues like employment rights, health insurance and disability benefits. Webinars, fact sheets and personalized support for understanding workplace protections (like the ADA and FMLA).

TriageCancer.org

- **Equal Employment Opportunity Commission**

Information on workplace rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and how to request reasonable accommodations during and after cancer treatment.

EEOC.gov

- **Job Accommodation Network**

The leading source of free, expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations.

AskJan.org

Financial resources

Cancer during young adulthood often disrupts education, work and financial independence, creating unexpected burdens at a critical life stage. Many young adults face challenges with medical debt, lost income and gaps in insurance coverage – all while trying to build their future.

Community resources:

Local support groups and organizations may offer resources or financial assistance to help ease the burden.

- **United Way 211**

Connects individuals of all ages to vital human and social services 24/7, free of charge. Services include information and referrals to available community resources, crisis intervention and care coordination for Veterans.

UnitedWayNEfl.org/get-help

- **V for Victory**

Provides support for local families through free meals from V's Pizzeria as well as a monthly newsletter offering other free services through their community partners for patients to utilize for assistance.

VforVictory.org

- **Pinky Promise Foundation**

Organization located in Callahan, Fla., that offers free wigs, head scarves, chemo gift bags, etc. Items are available for pickup at their Callahan location. Please bring a current pathology report and photo ID.

PinkyPromiseFoundation.org

Temporary assistance programs

Many nonprofits offer one-time or short-term grants to help with household costs during treatment. Patients can apply directly, and social work staff can assist with documentation if needed. The social services department can be contacted at 904.202.7315.

- **The Samfund-Financial Assistance Grant**

Applicants must be between the ages of 21-39 and have completed their cancer treatments. Can receive the grant twice. Offers financial assistance for rent/mortgage, car payments, fertility storage fees and reconstructive dental or cosmetics procedures related to cancer treatment.

ExpectMiraclesFoundation.org/financial-assistance-grant

- **Allyson Whitney Foundation**

Offers grants for individuals between the ages of 20-36 to help manage the financial costs of cancer care.

AllysonWhitney.org/grants

- **FL Cancer Specialist Foundation**

Can be used for household bills only – no medical bills. Funds are sent directly to company/biller. No funds go to the patient. Grant can be applied for twice.

FCSF.org/financial-aid

Additional resources can be found at:

BaptistMDAnderson.com/patients-and-families/survivorship/cancer-patient-online-resources

Not sure where to start? A social worker or patient navigator can help you access these resources and walk through applications or eligibility.