

# Transfer of Care Letter

Cervical Cancer

Patient



[DATE]

Re: Transfer of Care

Dear [ARIA: Insert Name],

You have finished your treatment and follow-up for cervical cancer at the Cancer Centre. Finishing cancer treatment is a time of change. We want you to know that even when you finish your treatment(s) and are no longer being seen at the cancer center regularly, you are not alone! Help and support is available.

There are things you can start or continue to do to manage your health care and improve your well-being. The information in this letter, along with the supports, resources and suggestions in the book [After Treatment: Information and Resources to Help You Set Priorities and Take Action](#), can help prepare you to move forward and live your best.

## Follow-up Appointments and Tests

Since we feel you are doing well, we will use a **Primary Care** model for your follow-up. This means that your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or gynecologist can safely do your cervical cancer follow-up from now on. Your primary health care provider will:

- Arrange tests to check for cancer (sometimes called **surveillance**)
- Continue to see you for any health conditions you have or any new problems
- Refer you back to a specialist or your cancer doctor (oncologist) if they have any concerns

For your cervical cancer follow-up:

- We recommend a **gynecologic exam with your family doctor, gynecologist or nurse practitioner**. This should include an internal vaginal exam (with Pap smear if you were not treated with radiotherapy), an internal rectal exam, and a review of any symptoms you may have. You will need to do this at least every year (your oncologist will have explained to you how often this needs to be), for the rest of your life.
- **You will not need** other tests like blood tests or x-rays for your regular follow-up unless your primary care provider asks for them.

**Remember, it is your responsibility to book your follow-up visits with your primary care provider or gynecologist so they can arrange the tests you need.**

## Continue to See Your Primary Health Care Provider

Continue to see your primary health care provider (such as your family doctor or nurse practitioner) for your regular health exams. We will send them a summary of your cancer treatment and follow-up recommendations so they are aware of what to do for follow-up.

If you need a family doctor, you can find one by calling Health Link Alberta (811) or going to: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page13253.aspx>. Once you have a doctor, let them know they can view the health care provider follow-up recommendations at [www.ahs.ca/guru](http://www.ahs.ca/guru).

## Manage Side Effects from Treatment

Most side effects will get better over the next several weeks and months, but it is important to tell your care team about any side effects or emotional concerns so they can help you. The [After Treatment](#) book has suggestions for managing common side effects. If you need more information, your Cancer Centre has detailed patient education materials for many different side effects.

## Know the Signs and Symptoms of Cervical Cancer Recurrence

Review the list of general symptoms to watch for in the [After Treatment](#) book. Below are some symptoms specific to cervical cancer. If these symptoms start and do not go away, call your primary care provider right away. They may do tests to see if the cancer has come back or refer you back to the Cancer Centre.

- Vaginal bleeding or unusual vaginal discharge
- Pelvic, hip, leg or back pain that is new or changing and/or will not go away
- Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea
- Unplanned weight loss
- Difficulty urinating or other changes when urinating

## Support and General Recommendations

As you move forward, you may have questions about what is next, what you should do to take care of yourself, or how to improve your well-being. We hope that along with your primary care physician, the [After Treatment](#) book will help you during this time of change, answer your questions, and give you the information and supports you need.

### Recommended Resources:

- [After Treatment: Information and Resources to Help You Set Priorities and Take Action](#) (book) — the oncology care team will give you this book at the end of your treatment

### Counselling and Support:

Many patients find counselling services or support groups helpful when adjusting to life after cancer. They can help with things such as communication, stress management, coping with treatment side effects, mood changes, quality of life, body image, sexual health, or loneliness. If you would like to set up a counselling appointment, please pick the closest location from the list below and call to make an appointment:

Calgary: 403-355-3207	Lethbridge: 403-388-6814	Other Communities visit <a href="http://www.ahs.ca/cpn">www.ahs.ca/cpn</a> and click: Provincial Cancer Patient Navigation
Edmonton: 780-643-4303	Medicine Hat: 403-529-8817	
Grande Prairie: 825-412-4200	Red Deer: 403-343-4485	

## Healthy Lifestyle Recommendations

You will find recommendations and information on ways to improve your well-being in the [After Treatment](#) book. **Reducing or quitting smoking is important for people who had cervical cancer because smoking increases the chance your cancer could come back. It also increases the chance of getting a new related cancer or pre-cancer changes.** For more information and resources please visit [albertaquits.ca](http://albertaquits.ca).

## Specific Concerns for Cervical Cancer Patients

### Sexual Health Concerns

Treatment for cervical cancer can impact your sexual function, health, relationships, and sometimes causes distress over body image. There are things you can do to help manage physical concerns, such as pain with sexual intercourse, vaginal dryness, and hot flashes. Strategies and support are also available to help you and your partner with intimacy problems, distress, and adjusting to these changes. See the Counselling and Support numbers listed in the section above or contact the **Oncology and Sexuality, Intimacy, and Survivorship** (OASIS) program:

- Calgary and Southern Alberta - 403-355-3246
- Edmonton and Northern Alberta - 780-432-8260

Resources for low sexual desire, women’s sexual health (including vaginal dryness and using a dilator) and fertility are available at your Cancer Centre or online at [www.myhealth.alberta.ca](http://www.myhealth.alberta.ca) (search “cancer and sexuality”).

### Menopause

Menopause is the time when you stop having menstrual periods because of changes in your body’s hormone levels. For people who have treatment for cervical cancer, menopause happens because of radiation treatment or removal of the ovaries. Symptoms, such as hot flashes, can happen in menopause. For help managing menopause symptoms, or if you have questions or concerns, talk with your primary health care provider. Other suggestions are included in the [After Treatment](#) book.

### HPV (Human Papillomavirus) Vaccine

Sometimes patients wonder if they should have the HPV vaccine. While this vaccine is recommended for females 9 to 45 years old, and males 9 to 26 years old, you do not need to get the vaccine if you had cervical cancer. If you are interested in more information about the vaccine for family or friends, visit [screeningforlife.ca](http://screeningforlife.ca) and click on “Cervical Cancer Screening” and then “About HPV.”

## Ongoing Care

If there are any concerns about your cancer returning, your family doctor will refer you back to us. Sincerely,

**Your Gynecologic Oncology Care Team**