



# HOPE & HEALING

A guide to helping survivors navigate through their journey

Visit us at [builttobeatcancer.com](http://builttobeatcancer.com)

Winter 2025 Issue

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Call Center: [404.531.4444](tel:404.531.4444)

**NORTHSIDE  
HOSPITAL  
CANCER INSTITUTE**  
**BUILT TO BEAT CANCER**



## Cancer Misinformation and How to Find Reliable Resources Online

By: Susan Kearney, MHSE

Finding reliable cancer information can be much harder than it should be. Cancer is one of the most frequently researched health topics on the internet. However, the amount of misinformation is growing rapidly. Misinformation is defined as information that is false, inaccurate or misleading according to the best available information at the time.

Here are a few things to look for when searching for cancer-related information:

### Who is managing the information?

It should be easy to find who is responsible for the information on the page.

### Does the website end in .gov or .edu?

If so, these are government and educational institutions. These resources are usually trustworthy.

### How current is the information?

Reliable online sources often show when the information was posted or last reviewed.

### Is the author a credentialed health care provider?

If not, be wary of the information. Try to determine if the author is sharing their personal experience, telling another person's experience or if they are simply giving their opinion. All of these could be accurate, but they could be untrustworthy as well.

### If asked for personal information, proceed with great caution.

Do not provide any personal information without knowing how it will be used. Additionally, it is important to be comfortable with the risk involved with sharing personal information online.

Another thing to remember when reading about other people's experiences is that everyone is different and as a result, their cancer is different. Two individuals may have the same type of cancer but react differently to treatments. Also, doctors may have different opinions on recommended complementary therapies based on the individual patient. Lastly, be cautious of the information on any website that sells products, supplements or therapies related to cancer. The information provided will support what is being sold, whether it is true or not. It is very important to always consult a physician before trying anything found online.

Below are trustworthy sources of cancer information. For assistance finding cancer information and/or sources, please contact a member of the Northside Hospital care team.

### [American Cancer Society](http://cancer.org/)

Provides extensive information on cancer types, treatments, support and survivorship. There is also information on prevention and screening, caregiver support and research – visit [cancer.org/](http://cancer.org/)

### [American Society for Radiation Oncology](http://astro.org/patient-care-and-research/shareable-resources/patient-brochures)

Offers multiple resources for patients undergoing radiation therapy – visit [astro.org/patient-care-and-research/shareable-resources/patient-brochures](http://astro.org/patient-care-and-research/shareable-resources/patient-brochures)

### [Cancer Support Community \(national website\)](http://cancersupportcommunity.org/)

Shares free educational resources through the program Frankly Speaking About Cancer®. This program is Cancer Support Community's landmark cancer education series that provides trusted information on a variety of topics important to people affected by cancer. The library includes information by disease site and topic, such as clinical trials, immunotherapy, precision medicine and caregiving. Many of the resources are available in multiple languages – visit [cancersupportcommunity.org/](http://cancersupportcommunity.org/)

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**Cancer Misinformation and How to Find Reliable Resources Online** *(continued from page 1)***National Cancer Institute (NCI)**

While primarily for online viewing, the NCI website has a vast amount of information on numerous topics and disease sites. To download or print information, visit [cancer.gov/publications/patient-education](https://cancer.gov/publications/patient-education).

**National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN)****Patient Guidelines**

Offers patient guidelines for over 50 cancer types, information on detection, prevention and risk reduction, supportive care and adolescent and young adult cancer. Multiple languages are available – please visit [nccn.org/global/what-we-do/guidelines-for-patients-translations](https://nccn.org/global/what-we-do/guidelines-for-patients-translations).

**ASK AN EXPERT****Clinical Research Q&A**

By: Katie Smith

**What is a clinical trial?**

According to [nih.gov](https://nih.gov), “Clinical trials are part of clinical research and at the heart of all medical advances. Clinical trials look at new ways to prevent, detect or treat disease. Clinical trials can study new drugs, new combinations of drugs, new ways to use existing treatments and new medical devices. Clinical trials can also look at new ways of doing surgery, behavioral changes to improve health and improving the quality of life for people with acute or chronic illnesses. The goal of clinical trials is to determine if the treatment, prevention and behavior approaches are safe and effective.”

**Are there different types of clinical trials?**

- **Prevention trials** look for better ways to prevent a disease in people who have never had the disease or to prevent the disease from returning. Approaches may include medicines, vaccines or lifestyle changes.
- **Screening trials** test new ways of detecting diseases or health conditions.
- **Diagnostic trials** study or compare tests or procedures for diagnosing a particular disease or condition.
- **Treatment trials** test new treatments, new combinations of drugs or new approaches to surgery or radiation therapy.
- **Behavioral trials** evaluate or compare ways to promote behavioral changes designed to improve health.
- **Quality of life trials** (or supportive care trials) explore and measure ways to improve the comfort and quality of life of people with conditions or illnesses.

**What does a trial's phase mean?**

As stated on [nih.gov](https://nih.gov), clinical trials are conducted in a series of steps called phases. Each phase has a different purpose and helps researchers answer different questions.

- **Phase I trials:** Researchers test a drug or treatment in a small group (20 to 80 people) for the first time. The purpose is to study the drug or treatment to learn about safety and identify side effects.

- **Phase II trials:** The new drug or treatment is given to a larger group (100 to 300 people) to determine its effectiveness and to study its safety further.
- **Phase III trials:** The new drug or treatment is given to an even larger group (1,000 to 3,000 people) to confirm its effectiveness, monitor side effects, compare it with standard or similar treatments and collect information that will allow the new drug or treatment to be used safely.
- **Phase IV trials:** After a drug or treatment is approved by the FDA and made available to the public, researchers track its safety in the general population, seeking more information about its benefits and optimal use.

**What are inclusion and exclusion criteria?**

There are guidelines for each trial that researchers follow when deciding who can participate in a study. According to [nih.gov](https://nih.gov), these guidelines are called inclusion/exclusion criteria. Factors that allow individuals to take part in a clinical trial are called inclusion criteria. Those that exclude or prevent participation are exclusion criteria. These criteria are based on factors such as age, gender, the type and stage of a disease, treatment history and other medical conditions. Before joining a clinical trial, one must provide information that allows the research team to determine whether the person can take part in the study safely.

**Why should I consider participating in a clinical trial? How might it help me?**

Patients take part in clinical trials for many reasons. Healthy volunteers may take part to help others and contribute to moving science forward. Patients with an illness or disease may also participate to help others and receive the newest treatment and/or to have added (or extra) care and attention from the clinical trial staff. Clinical trials offer hope to many and the potential to help researchers find better treatments for others in the future.

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**Clinical Research Q&A** *(continued from page 2)***What are some of the possible benefits of taking part in a clinical trial?**

- Helping others by contributing to knowledge about new treatments or procedures.
- Gaining access to new research treatments before they are widely available.
- Receiving regular and careful medical attention from a research team that includes doctors and other health professionals.

**What are some of the potential risks associated with taking part in a clinical trial?**

- Potentially unpleasant, serious or even life-threatening effects of experimental treatment.
- Substantial time commitment may be greater than a standard treatment, including visits to the study site, additional blood tests, additional procedures, hospital stays and/or complex dosage schedules.

**If I do participate, will I continue to see my current doctor, will I see a new doctor or both?**

While participating in a clinical trial, all patients will continue to see their respective doctors. Sometimes, it is necessary to see a study doctor for certain parts of the trial. The study doctor is specially trained to monitor all patients participating in the clinical trial. The study doctor always keeps the respective patient's health care team aware of how things are going.

**Does insurance cover the costs of participation or will there be extra costs associated with participation?**

Most insurance companies cover standard-of-care costs related to a clinical trial. There are some research studies where the study sponsor pays for certain items and services. Each patient needs to contact their insurance company directly to understand their specific insurance policy and how research studies are covered. During the informed consent discussion with the study team, all this information is reviewed in detail.

**How do I learn about which clinical trials are being offered at Northside Hospital?**

To learn more about clinical trials at Northside, email [clinical.trials@northside.com](mailto:clinical.trials@northside.com) or call [404.303.3355](tel:404.303.3355). Patients are encouraged to ask their Northside health care provider about clinical trial options currently offered.

**BOOST YOUR HEALTH & WELLNESS****Why Restrictive Diets Do Not Work and How to Find Long-Term Solutions**

*By: Charlotte Chang, RDN, CSO, LD*

Is the thought of beginning a new diet plan overwhelming? Oftentimes, restrictive diet plans promise short-term weight loss but do not offer long-term behavior changes or habits needed to make results last. This is why studies have shown that those who lose weight through dieting end up gaining the weight back within 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

"I just need to restart my diet plan again to get back on track," is a common statement heard from chronic dieters, especially in the new year. Therein lies the main problem—it is not sustainable. If it were, individuals would have reached the proposed health goals, maintained success with weight loss and would not need to restart a diet.

To develop lasting healthy eating habits, try finding methods that are sustainable for busy weeks, vacations, social events, holidays and stressful days! These solutions should be integrated into daily life in a balanced way.

One solution is to try breaking down large goals into smaller, realistic action steps. Some examples include practicing self-compassion to reduce food guilt after eating certain foods, chewing food slowly (as it takes the body approximately 20 minutes to register that it is full) and having a snack before going to the grocery store or a social event to avoid unnecessary purchases and overeating.

Dietitians can help provide the tools needed to make lasting and positive changes, too. Learn to stop restrictive dieting and discover personalized healthy habits and goals by calling [404.236.8036](tel:404.236.8036) to schedule an appointment with a Northside Hospital registered dietitian!

**Reference:**

1. Hall KD, Kahan S. Maintenance of lost weight and long-term management of obesity. *Med Clin North Am.* 2018;102(1):183-197.

## Recipe Corner: Quick Eight-Vegetable Soup

### Ingredients

- 1 Tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 chopped onion
- 4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
- ½ cup frozen baby lima beans
- 1 (15-ounce) can, no-salt-added, black or Great Northern beans
- 1 cup frozen mixed vegetables
- ½ cup frozen bell peppers
- 2 teaspoons dried oregano or thyme
- 1 cup broccoli florets
- Salt to taste
- ¼ cup grated parmesan cheese

### Directions

- 1) In a large saucepan, heat olive oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until translucent (about five minutes). Add broth and bring liquid to boil. Add lima beans, reduce heat and simmer covered for five minutes.
- 2) Add canned beans, mixed vegetables, peppers, oregano and simmer for five minutes. Add broccoli, cover and cook for five minutes. Serve with 1 tablespoon of parmesan cheese.
- 3) This soup will keep in the refrigerator when covered for three days or up to three months in the freezer.



**Nutrition information:** Makes 4 servings (1⅓ cup). Per serving: 250 calories, 32 grams carbohydrates, 10 grams protein, 9 grams dietary fiber, 0 grams added sugar. Recipe and photo from [American Institute for Cancer Research](#)



## Small Steps, Big Impact: Incorporating Exercise Throughout the Day

By: Joanna Collins, OT

Exercising can be a powerful tool for a cancer survivor to help the body recover from treatment and maintain overall health for the future. While the gym may feel intimidating and finding time to exercise at home can be challenging, remember that exercise does not have to follow an all-or-nothing mindset. In fact, research shows that shorter bursts of exercise throughout the day can be just as beneficial as formal workouts.<sup>1</sup>

When planning an exercise routine, focus on incorporating three key areas, also known as the three pillars of exercise:



### Strength Training:

Use resistance, such as weights or body weight, to strengthen muscles.



### Cardiovascular Training:

Engage in activities to elevate heart rate and improve lung function.



### Stretching:

Keep the body flexible by stretching regularly.

If dealing with cancer-related fatigue, try combining exercise with energy conservation strategies to boost energy levels. One effective approach is to tie exercise to daily activities, making it easier to integrate movement into a daily routine.

Here are some ideas to help incorporate exercise into daily life:

### Morning Routine

- **Stretch Post-Shower:** Stretch right after showering when muscles are warm.
- **Multitask While Grooming:** Add squats, leg lifts or march in place while brushing teeth or blow-drying hair.

### Kitchen Activities

- **While Waiting:** Use the time spent waiting for coffee or a pot to boil to do arm exercises, leg lifts or squats.

- **Dance While Cooking:** Turn on some fun tunes and dance around the kitchen.

### Around the House or Yard

- **Walk to the Mailbox:** Skip picking up the mail from the car. Walk past the mailbox and back, gradually increasing the distance.
- **TV Workouts:** Use commercial breaks for quick exercises like squats, marching, push-ups or sitting exercises and recover during the show.
- **Cleaning Cardio:** Add wrist weights while vacuuming, sweeping or dusting. For extra fun, set a timer and try to beat the previous record.
- **Yard Work:** Opt for manual tasks like raking leaves or carrying a watering can instead of using power tools or hoses.

### Community Errands

- **Park Further Away:** Park at the back of the lot and walk briskly to the entrance.
- **Store Laps:** Walk two or three laps around the store before beginning to shop.
- **Use a Basket:** Carry items instead of pushing a cart to engage muscles.

### While at Work

- **Take the Stairs:** Start with one flight a day and add more as endurance builds.
- **Lunchtime Stretch Break:** Stretch at the desk or take a short walk during the lunch break.
- **Desk Exercises:** Try leg lifts, chair squats, calf raises or desk push-ups.
- **Stand More:** Use a standing desk or stand while taking phone calls.

By weaving exercise into a daily routine, meaningful progress toward better health can be made without it feeling overwhelming. Start small, stay consistent and celebrate each step forward.

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**Small Steps, Big Impact: Incorporating Exercise Throughout the Day** *(continued from page 4)*

Also, check out the exercise programs provided by [Cancer Support Community Atlanta](#), which is affiliated with the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute. If more support and guidance are needed, it may be best to discuss concerns with a medical provider and receive further evaluation and treatment from a rehabilitation professional.

Learn more about Oncology Rehabilitation services offered at Northside Hospital by visiting [northsiderehabilitation.com/services/oncology-rehab](https://northsiderehabilitation.com/services/oncology-rehab). A physician referral is required for therapy.

Reference: 1. Stamatakis E, et al. *Nat Med*. 2022 Dec;28(12):2521-2529.

**STORIES OF HOPE & HEALING\*****Survivor Story: Meet Alan****What are the events that led up to your cancer diagnosis?**

For a couple of years, I felt a strange tightness in my upper right torso. My labs were not showing signs of anything until January 2023, when I went in for my annual physical exam. From there, I was sent for CT and MRI scans. Following the review of

those scans, I was sent to oncology. In February of that year, I had a few needle biopsies that were inconclusive. After that, I was referred to Dr. Mary Ninan (medical oncologist) and Dr. Thomas Wood (surgeon), which resulted in needing an inguinal biopsy, which led to a diagnosis on March 31, 2023, of stage 3 Hodgkin lymphoma.

**What treatment did you receive?**

I received 12 rounds of chemotherapy in six months. It was very intense chemotherapy that was very hard on my body. I developed sepsis during my very first round and was in and out of the hospital for the majority of the six months. I spent every holiday, including my birthday, in the oncology unit at Northside Hospital Forsyth. While it was difficult to be in the hospital so frequently, I received excellent care during my stays.

**How and where did you receive support during your treatment and recovery?**

My wife, Samona, and my best friend, Henry, were my biggest supporters during my treatment. Of course, my family, children and friends, both near and far, were a

great support to me as well.

**Did you utilize patient support resources at Northside Hospital Cancer Institute? If so, which would you recommend?**

Northside Hospital Cancer Institute has been a huge factor in my journey to remission. I recommend that all individuals going through treatment do their research and take advantage of all the support and services that Northside has to offer. Additionally, I recently attended the Northside Hospital Cancer Institute Cancer Survivor Retreat where I met some wonderful individuals and had a great time.

**How far out are you from treatment, or is treatment ongoing?**

I am currently in remission; however, I did receive a secondary cancer diagnosis this year of squamous cell carcinoma in situ. I had surgery in December of 2024 that removed 15% of the left side of my tongue.

**Closing Thoughts**

I am a true believer in Northside Hospital Cancer Institute. My family and I volunteer for the different events that are local to us. We truly enjoy the opportunity to give back. I would like to thank the wonderful staff and clinicians who make Northside an excellent provider in cancer care.



\*Patients' stories are based on individual experiences. The process from diagnosis through treatment may vary as well as symptoms, side effects and provider recommendations.

**COMMUNITY SUPPORT & RESOURCES****Community Partner Spotlight: [Leukemia & Lymphoma Society](#)****Purpose of the organization.**

The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's (LLS) mission is to:

- Cure leukemia, lymphoma, Hodgkin's disease and myeloma.
- Improve the quality of life for patients and their families.
- Advocate for policies to remove barriers to care for cancer patients.

Guided by this mission statement, LLS focuses on research, patient access and advocacy.

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## Community Partner Spotlight: Leukemia & Lymphoma Society *(continued from page 5)*

### Population that LLS serves.

LLS serves the approximately 1.7 million Americans currently living with, or in remission from, a blood cancer, including anyone who has a blood cancer diagnosis, as well as their families, caregivers and health care providers. On average, LLS in Georgia supports over 1,000 individuals annually with financial needs through financial support programs.

### Resources that LLS provides to patients, survivors and/or caregivers.

LLS offers several incredible [resources](#) to patients, survivors and caregivers:

- **Family Support Groups:** Free, in-person or virtual groups that provide a safe space for patients and families to share information, feelings and education. Groups are facilitated by credentialed health professionals with experience in oncology and group work.
- **Patient Outreach Programs:** LLS reaches patients, caregivers and health care professionals through webcasts, podcasts, conferences, educational booklets and an online community.
- **Patti Robinson Kaufmann First Connection® Program:** A peer-to-peer support program that matches patients and family members with trained volunteers based on factors like diagnosis, age and gender.

For more information, please email the Patient and Community Outreach Manager at [brittley.wills@lls.org](mailto:brittley.wills@lls.org).

### Volunteer opportunities that LLS offers and the best way to get involved.

Throughout the year, LLS offers several options for volunteers to get more involved within the community. To learn how to get more involved, please contact the [local team at LTN.GAA@lls.org](#). There are also a few unique opportunities for survivors to volunteer through the [Patti Robinson Kaufmann First Connection® Program](#) and others within the community through [Policy and Advocacy](#) efforts.

### Partnership between LLS and Northside Hospital Cancer Institute.

LLS has partnered with Northside Hospital Cancer Institute for over 20 years through the [Light The Night](#) event, the [Georgia Blood Cancer Conference](#) and most recently, the [Student Visionaries of the Year](#) program. This partnership has provided Georgia patients and their families with resources to ensure that they are receiving everything needed to navigate a diagnosis. LLS is granted the opportunity to attend Northside's caregiver events as well, such as the Annual Patient and Caregiver Education Conference to share more information regarding the latest updates on the programs and services offered. Survivorship is also celebrated through the [Honored Hero Program](#).

## New Year Brings New Support Groups to Cancer Support Community Atlanta



Cancer Support Community (CSC) Atlanta is happy to announce the beginning of two new support groups in January 2025. Both groups will be held in person, creating a powerful opportunity for individuals to connect face-to-face and create a sense of community and shared experiences.

The first group will serve individuals currently undergoing cancer treatment, including chemotherapy, immunotherapy, radiation and/or surgery. In this safe space, members will find emotional support, educational resources on coping strategies and the chance to connect with others on a similar journey. The **Active Treatment Support Group** will be led by a licensed mental health professional and held on **the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 11 a.m. to noon** at CSC Atlanta.

The second support group is for individuals who have completed treatment and are navigating life after cancer. This group will provide a safe and understanding space to share experiences, find encouragement and rebuild

a sense of community. Whether adjusting to physical changes, managing emotional challenges or simply seeking connection with others who truly understand, members of this group will come together to create a compassionate environment to heal and thrive. Also led by a licensed mental health professional, the **Beyond Cancer Support Group** will be held **the first and third Tuesdays of each month from 1 to 2 p.m.** at CSC Atlanta.

In addition to support groups, CSC Atlanta offers a variety of support programs for anyone affected by cancer. To learn more about the organization's nutrition programs, stress reduction classes, gentle exercise classes, video resource library and social activities, visit [cscatlanta.org](https://cscatlanta.org) or call [404.843.1880](tel:404.843.1880).

*Cancer Support Community Atlanta is located at the Center Pointe Building at 1100 Johnson Ferry Road NE, Building 2, Suite LL90, Atlanta, GA 30342.*

Do you have a question you would like answered by an expert or a story to share in a future issue of Hope & Healing? If so, please send your questions or stories to [survivornewsletter@northside.com](mailto:survivornewsletter@northside.com).



## GET INVOLVED

## Northside Hospital Events Continue to Raise Awareness and Funds for the Early Detection and Diagnosis of Breast Cancer



### Paint Gwinnett Pink

Paint Gwinnett Pink (PGP) has now raised over \$3.3 million in cumulative proceeds for breast tomosynthesis imaging technology. This technology produces a 3D image of the breast that aids in the early detection and diagnosis of breast cancer. Proceeds have been used to upgrade mammography machines at Northside Hospital imaging centers in Duluth, Hamilton Mill and Lawrenceville. This year's event raised \$460,000 and had the most participants in PGP history with over 2,200 registrants and over 60 vendors. Thank you to everyone who participated! We look forward to seeing you again in 2025!



### Tennis & Pickleball Against Breast Cancer 2024

Thank you to everyone who participated in Tennis & Pickleball Against Breast Cancer 2024! The event had over 1,250 players at 15 facilities and raised over \$400,000 – the most ever in the history of this event. The funds raised will help provide screening mammograms for over 2,500 local uninsured women over the next year.



Please mark your calendar for our 2025 event!

October 3: North Fulton/Gwinnett

October 17: Cherokee

October 10: Forsyth

October 24: North Fulton



## Save the Date for the 2025 Survivor Retreat!

The 2025 Survivor Retreat will be held Friday, April 25 – Sunday, April 27, at the Elohee Retreat Center in Sautee Nacoochee, Georgia. Applications will be accepted from Tuesday, January 21 – Friday, February 21, and survivors are encouraged to apply early due to limited openings. Participants must be at least 18 years of age, independent and ambulatory. Transportation to and from the retreat will be provided, and the entire weekend stay will be free of charge.

Visit the NHCI Cancer Survivor Retreat [webpage](#) for more details and to access the application. Please send all three completed application pages to [kymberly.duncan@northside.com](mailto:kymberly.duncan@northside.com).



### Upcoming Cancer Awareness Months

**January:** Cervical Cancer

**February:** Gallbladder/Bile Duct Cancer and National Cancer Prevention Month

**March:** Colorectal Cancer, Kidney Cancer and Multiple Myeloma

To subscribe to Hope & Healing, visit:  
[northside.com/hope-healing-sign-up](https://northside.com/hope-healing-sign-up).





## PATIENT EDUCATION & SUPPORT EVENTS

Presented by: Jen Fecher, Empowering Intimacy, Sexual Wellness Intimacy & Dysfunction Expert Educator  
visit the Cancer Support Community [webpage](#) to register.

Cancer Transitions is a free four-week virtual workshop designed to help cancer survivors make the transition from active treatment to survivorship. Each week participants will meet for a 90-minute virtual session to discuss important topics focused on health and wellbeing. For more information and registration, please email [lauren@cscatlanta.org](mailto:lauren@cscatlanta.org)



April 8, 2025 @ The Cancer Support Center at Northside Hospital Gwinnett



May 10, 2025 @ 8:00 a.m. @ The Shoppes at River Crossing  
in Macon

Save the date. More details to follow.

April 8, 2025 @ Truist Park in Atlanta





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