

THE NAVIGATOR

Your Cancer Care Resource



Welcome

Manatee YourChoice Health Plan has partnered with Beacon Advocates to provide support to members and families facing a cancer diagnosis.

This quarterly newsletter is designed to supplement that support with educational resources for patients and caregivers. Discover information about risk factors, screenings, early detection and more.

Have suggestions? Ideas for future topics? We'd love to hear from you! Email feedback to info@beaconadvocates.com.

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Have you or your loved one been diagnosed with cancer?

If so, Beacon is here for you.

Beacon Advocates is pleased to partner with YourChoice Health Plan to provide you with personalized cancer navigation and advocacy services at no extra cost to you.

By itself, a diagnosis of cancer is overwhelming. Add to the emotional blow the growing complexity of the disease and its treatment options, and patients caught the middle can feel confused and afraid. A trusted personal advisor to complement their medical team is a welcome ally. This is where Beacon Advocates make such a difference; we partner with patients and guide them toward the best possible treatment decisions.

Founded in 2012, Beacon Advocates offers customized patient care management and navigation solutions for patients and their family members. Our licensed, certified oncology team of nurses and social workers has over 100 years of combined expertise in cancer care and advocacy, freeing you and your loved ones to focus on what matters most – beating the disease.

Please call us for a consultation at 855-490-8777
or visit beaconadvocates.com
for more information.

**OCTOBER IS
BREAST CANCER
AWARENESS
MONTH**

For more information,
click [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).

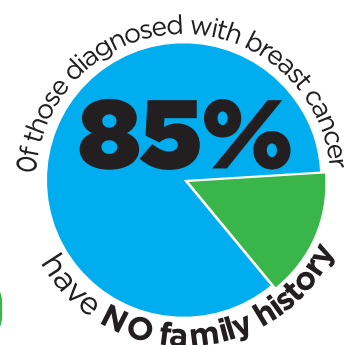


1 in 8 women
(white)



1 in 9 women
(non-hispanic
black)

1 in 1000 Men have a lifetime risk





Did you Know?

- 1 of 7 men will develop Prostate cancer
- 1 out of 8 women will develop Breast cancer
- 1 of 21 men and 1 of 23 women will develop Colon or Rectum cancer

YourChoice Health Plan Wellness Exam and Screenings

- Clinical Breast Exam
- Mammogram:
 - every 2 years (age 40-49)
 - annually (age 50+)



Can You Lower Your Risk?

A 'risk factor' is anything that increases your chance of developing cancer. Some risk factors for cancer can be avoided, but many cannot. For example, both smoking and inheriting certain genes are risk factors for some types of cancer, but only smoking can be avoided. Many other factors in our environment, diet, and lifestyle may cause or prevent cancer. Though there is no certain way to prevent cancer, science has demonstrated that following may influence risk of cancer:

Lifestyle choices:

- **Chewing tobacco** is linked to oral cancers.
- **Smoking** is linked to several types of cancer: lung, bladder, head and neck, and colon cancers. For help quitting, visit [Manatee Your Choice](#)
- **Diet and exercise** - Poor diet and lack of regular exercise can lead to obesity and may increase your cancer risk.
- **Alcohol** - Excessive alcohol intake is linked to multiple cancers. It also increases the amount of estrogen, which is a breast cancer risk factor.

Knowing the **non-lifestyle related risk factors** helps to make you aware of the importance for early detection through screening. These include:

- **Aging** - Aging is the most significant risk factor for cancer. According to the National Cancer Institute, the risk of developing cancer gets higher after age 50, and half of all cancers occur at age 66 and above.
- **Radiation exposure** - Some types of radiation have the potential to damage DNA, and may cause cancer.
- **Certain hormones** - Some types of normally producing hormones can drive the development of certain types of hormone-sensitive cancers, such as breast, ovarian, uterine or endometrial cancers.
- **Some viruses and bacteria** - Certain viruses, bacteria and parasites can increase the risk of cancer by disrupting the normal cell growth. Others can weaken the immune system or cause chronic inflammation, which may lead to cancer.

Learn more [HERE](#).

Spotlight on Breast Cancer

Know your breast cancer risk factors and discuss these with your medical provider.

Lifestyle Related Risk Factors

- Diet
- Exercise
- Weight
- Tobacco use
- Alcohol use
- Breast-feeding (>1 yr)
- Use of hormone replacement
- Disruptive sleep patterns

Non-lifestyle Related Risk Factors

- Female
- Increased age
- Personal or family history of breast or ovarian cancer
- Race
- Ethnicity
- Breast density
- Age at first period
- Age at first pregnancy (>30 yr)
- Never having children
- Age at menopause

Screening tools include

- Self-breast exam
- Health care provider driven
 - Mammogram
 - Clinical breast exam
 - Ultrasound
 - MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) in women with a high risk of breast cancer

Signs and Symptoms

- Lump or breast mass (painless)
- Less common: Changes to the breast: thickening, swelling, distortion, tenderness, skin irritation, redness, scaliness, nipple abnormalities or discharge.

What's Next?

If a screening detects that you may have breast cancer, your provider will likely refer you to a surgeon or specialist who will perform additional diagnostic tests and determine the specifics and severity of the disease.

More detailed information [HERE](#):



The Emotional Toll of Caregiving

Caring for someone with cancer can be physically and emotionally draining. Physically, you may experience fatigue, changes in appetite or problems sleeping. Emotionally, you may feel sad, anxious, guilty, angry, frustrated or helpless.

Too often, caregivers put their own needs aside to focus on their loved one's needs. This may lead to caregiver burnout, which can express itself as:

- Illness
- Depression
- Social withdrawal
- Increased anxiety
- Irritability
- Resentment

It's common for caregivers to become stressed trying to wade through all the cancer research and treatments available. It can be difficult to take control of someone else's calendar and to schedule what can seem an endless array of appointments.

Beacon Advocates does all of the above, leaving a caregiver to focus on supporting the patient emotionally.

Caregiver tips include:

- Accept that good and bad days are inevitable. Try to remember the good days when a bad one does occur.
- Try to focus on what you can do instead of dwelling on what is not possible. No, you can't singlehandedly cure the patient's cancer – but you can be there for them in whatever capacity they need.
- Consider reaching out to an organization such as The National Alliance for Caregiving or the American Cancer Society for additional resources and local support groups.
- Don't ignore signs of burnout. If you feel depressed, withdrawn, anxious or irritable, take a step back and find help for your caregiver duties.
- Ask for help. All Manatee County Govt employees have access to counseling services through the LAMP program.

Call 941-741-2995 or visit

www.manateeyourchoice.com/LAMP

More tips are [HERE](#).

Cancer Patients Want to Hear This, Not That

Learning that a friend or family member has cancer is a shock. If you're not sure what to say to someone who has suddenly become a patient, here's a short guide.

If they have been newly diagnosed, talk to the person. Let them know that you will be a support for them through this journey, whatever it encompasses.

Instead of: Everything will be ok...

Try: I'm here for you throughout this whole ordeal.

Unfortunately, you cannot guarantee that everything will be 'ok.' What a patient can count on is your friendship and support. Now that you've declared it, show with your actions what words cannot say. Be patient and as understanding as possible.

Instead of: I'm sure you're too tired to go out, but we're planning a party...

Try: We're planning a party and would love to see you there!

Don't assume the worst – hope for the best. It's an old adage, but it's an adage for a reason. Assume your friend or family member wants to be included in events. If you would invite him/her before the diagnosis, don't let the word 'cancer' stop you now.

Instead of: I'd never do that treatment plan.

Try: I'm here if you need rides to and from the hospital/chemo center/etc.

You may be doing your own research about therapies, but don't criticize the one they've chosen. Being judgmental doesn't make you a good friend. If you're close with this person and it feels right, you can ask if they've heard of certain clinical trials, etc. Ultimately, though, respect their treatment choices.



Be aware that as your friend or loved one moves into recovery, there's a sort of shell-shock that settles in after the treatments cease and recovery begins. Your presence alone has been a constant for the patient, reminding them of the unwavering support that held them up throughout hard times. Celebrate together what is hopefully the end of this experience.

If necessary, encourage the person to consult a therapist and talk through the change in your relationship. For spouses, this can prove especially helpful. Get back to the daily routine of taking care of each other. And celebrate a life lived together.

For more tips on how to support a cancer patient throughout their journey, [CLICK HERE](#).

Newly Diagnosed

After surviving the initial shock of a cancer diagnosis, additional challenges are inevitable. Potential sources of fear and anxiety include understanding the treatments recommended for you, potentially unpleasant side effects, lifestyle changes, financial worries, body-image issues, and concerns about how your diagnosis will affect your job, family members, and other interpersonal relationships. After 27 years as an oncology nurse, I can attest to what research has proven: One of the most important resources a cancer patient can have is a solid system of support.

**Submitted by Sue Ellen G., RN, OCN
a Beacon Oncology Nurse Advocate**

Fear of the unknown is one of the most common sources of distress I have encountered with new cancer patients in my many years as an oncology nurse. But what happens next? How do you get through the weeks or months of treatment and somehow keep your life together? Here are a few tips I've collected to help you do just that.

Become your own advocate. Clear and honest communication with your oncologist and your oncology nurse can help to ease some of this fear. Additionally, your oncology nurse can assist you in answering questions or helping you to find appropriate resources. Most oncology nurses have the experience, information, and knowledge to help you make informed decisions about your cancer care. Knowledge equals power. Though you will be faced with making difficult decisions throughout your journey, educated decisions almost always result in better outcomes. Understanding your treatment and options helps you to feel empowered.

Look for a doctor who willingly listens and provides answers to the questions burning in your mind. This creates an atmosphere of mutual respect that facilitates a more trusting relationship between you and your oncology team. Taking a stance to be



involved in your care is the first step in taking back some of the control that you need to move forward with a decisive, positive outlook.

Engage your personal support system. In my experience, cancer patients with a strong support system consistently have better outcomes emotionally, physically, and according to research, a strong support may even play a role in overall survival. You are likely to cope better with people around who can help encourage you to take good care of yourself and to do things for you when you're not up to it.

Consider a Beacon Advocate if:

- You do not feel you fully understand your cancer, treatment, or available options
- You have concerns about making decisions regarding your treatment on your own
- You need help understanding your health insurance benefits
- You feel overwhelmed by the complexity of your treatment plan and need assistance coordinating your care
- You want a licensed, experienced, certified oncology nurse to participate in some or all your care to help you make informed decisions
- You are worried about finances: housing, utilities, childcare, and transportation



At Beacon, our singular mission is to guide you through the entire experience to ensure you receive the best cancer care available. Each engagement is tailored to meet your unique needs. As 'insiders' who know how to navigate the healthcare system, Beacon Advocates combines principles of case management with clinical oncology expertise to identify, review, and stay up-to-date on the latest science to guide and advocate for you.

Among the ways Beacon Advocates can assist you:

- Eliminate barriers to the best care
- Navigate the complexities of cancer care within the healthcare maze
- Provide peace of mind
- Understand insurance benefits and reduce access barriers
- Understand disease and treatment options
- Develop a list of questions to discuss with your medical team
- Compare planned treatments to scientific (evidence-based) clinical treatment guidelines
- Research clinical treatment and clinical trials
- Guide through changes in treatment regimens
- Review and organize medical records and bills
- Coordinate all or parts of cancer care



We understand the challenges and know how to navigate the health care system to ensure you get the best cancer care and support. Our focus is on you and your cancer experience.

For more information, call today. 855-490-8777 or visit BeaconAdvocates.com