



MASSACHUSETTS
GENERAL HOSPITAL

CANCER CENTER

Everyday Amazing

A GUIDE TO
THE MASS GENERAL
CANCER CENTER FOR
PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

WELCOME

WELCOME TO THE MASSACHUSETTS GENERAL HOSPITAL CANCER CENTER.

Thank you for choosing us to provide your care. Our teams of compassionate professionals have subspecialized expertise in your type of cancer and are committed to advancing knowledge and rapidly translating discovery into exceptional, personalized cancer care.

We understand that cancer can affect your mind, spirit, and soul, as well as your body, but there are many things you can do to help yourself. This guide is intended to help you learn more about your care and the wide range of resources the Mass General Cancer Center offers to assist you and your family. We believe that learning about your cancer and ways to manage symptoms and stress may help you feel less overwhelmed.

**Every single day, every moment, holds the opportunity
for something amazing to happen.**

For additional information on any of the topics in this guide, please visit [massgeneral.org/cancer](https://www.massgeneral.org/cancer) or call **617-726-5130**.

YOUR TEAM

Our approach to patient care unites cancer specialists to create a personalized treatment plan for each patient. You will benefit from a team of specialists who focus on your particular type of cancer and create a coordinated subspecialty plan. Because the Mass General Cancer Center is part of a larger general hospital, you will also benefit from the coordination of care from specialists in other disease areas should other medical issues arise.

Members of the team will discuss your case and recommend treatment for your specific needs. They will talk to each other, and with you, on a regular basis as your care is planned throughout your treatment. They will remain your team even if you are admitted to the hospital. The team includes subspecialists in medical, surgical, and radiation oncology, along with pathology, imaging, genetics, and other subspecialties as needed — experts who understand the complexity of individual types of cancer and know how to apply that knowledge to your specific case.

Your multidisciplinary care team will include doctors, access nurses, nurse practitioners, practice nurses, and social workers, all focused on your particular type of cancer. Other specialized health care professionals and additional staff members are available to you, including dietitians, chaplains, pharmacists, physical and occupational therapists, palliative care specialists, and medical interpreters. The team will work with you and your family to keep you up-to-date on your treatment plan and answer any questions you may have.

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH YOUR TEAM

These guidelines can help us work together to provide you with the best possible quality care that meets your individual needs.

OUR ROLE

As dedicated partners in your cancer care, we will:

- » Keep you informed about how treatment is working.
- » Help relieve your pain and address any side effects of treatment.
- » Treat you with care and dignity, including respecting your personal wishes and beliefs.
- » Encourage you and your loved ones to ask questions. We will give clear and complete explanations that you understand.
- » Provide information about educational resources and support services that are available to you, your family, and friends.

You will benefit from a team of specialists who focus on your particular type of cancer and create a coordinated subspecialty plan.

YOUR ROLE

You are a working partner in your care. It is important that you:

- » Communicate honestly and openly with your care team about all topics including:
 - Your health history and current symptoms.
 - Prescriptions, over-the-counter medications, and supplements you are taking.
 - Changes in your condition, including side effects.
 - How you are coping emotionally with cancer.
 - Personal wishes and beliefs.
 - Medical choices that you might face in the future. Complete your advance care planning, such as a health care proxy or living will. Choosing a health care proxy is essential. The person you choose will tell the hospital and care team how you want to be treated and whom you want to make decisions for you if you cannot speak for yourself at the time. Ask a member of your care team for a health care proxy form.
- » Come prepared to ask questions about any aspect of your treatment or illness that you do not understand.
- » Ask about the many Cancer Center support services and educational resources. They are there to help you and we encourage you to use them. Please visit the Maxwell V. Blum Cancer Support and Education Hub in the Yawkey Center on the 7th floor or cancercenterpx.org to learn more.
- » Include your friends or family in your care. Bringing a friend or family member to your appointments may help you ask questions and remember information about your care, as well as about the educational and support services available.

“My care team has always done their best to keep me in good health, and after 20 years, they feel like family now.” —Steve, Patient

WHAT CANCER CARE INVOLVES

Understanding your specific diagnosis and tracking your progress is an essential part of your cancer care. Throughout your treatment, your team may request tests be completed and will explain the process to you.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Imaging Tests

Imaging tests (MRIs, CT scans, X-rays, PET scans, etc.) are an important part of cancer care. They help determine diagnosis and can give valuable information about your condition and the right treatment. Imaging tests can be done in the hospital or at another Mass General site closer to your home. Talk with your care team to determine the best location for your tests to be done.

Laboratory Tests

Laboratory tests are done on a regular basis for most patients. Results of your lab tests provide important information throughout your treatment. It is important to follow your team's instructions about the tests you need and when these tests need to take place.

If you have a chemotherapy appointment, please arrive at least one hour early to have your blood

test performed. For other monitoring tests, you can choose to have your blood test at the main hospital or at another Mass General location or Partners-affiliated site. Ask your care team about your options.

Biopsies

A biopsy is a sample of tissue taken from the body in order to examine it more closely under a microscope. There are several types of biopsies that can be performed to aid in diagnosis and monitoring of therapy. Your care team will talk with you about the best option for your situation.

Cancer Risk Assessment and Genetic Counseling

massgeneral.org/ccra

Some individuals may have an increased risk of developing cancer based on their personal and/or family history. In certain cases, genetic testing can help further clarify your risk. The process of genetic counseling helps you to make informed medical decisions about genetic testing and cancer screening. The Center for Cancer Risk Assessment provides evaluation, education, testing, and referral for appropriate ongoing monitoring, treatment, and follow-up for hereditary cancers.

It is important to follow your team's instructions about the tests you need and when these tests need to take place.

They gave us hope, they made my mother smile, and they gave her strength to fight this disease. —Susan, Family Member

Depending on the type and stage of cancer you have, your multidisciplinary care team may recommend surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, clinical trials, targeted therapy, immunotherapy, or some combination of these treatments. A member of your care team will explain your treatments to you in detail.

TREATMENTS

Medical Therapies

Chemotherapy is a special medication that kills cancer cells. There are many types of chemotherapy that work in different ways. Chemotherapy may be given as a pill, injection, or through an infusion into a vein (IV). Intravenous drug therapies are prepared on-site by specially trained pharmacists and are given by skilled nurses. This treatment is provided as an outpatient in our Infusion Unit or as an inpatient on the designated oncology units in the hospital.

Targeted therapies are used to target specific mutations in tumors to stop the growth of cancer cells while leaving normal cells unharmed. These new drugs may provide new options for patients whose tumors have become resistant to conventional therapy. Many cancers are responding to these new drugs, and our researchers continue to identify new mutations and develop clinical trials to test new targeted therapies through the Henri and Belinda Termeer Center for Targeted Therapies. A specialized nursing team oversees these complex clinical trials. targetedcancer.org

Immunotherapy is a treatment that uses your body's own immune system to help fight cancer. Using materials made by the body or in a laboratory, the treatment is used to improve, target, or restore immune system function. These treatments are becoming the standard of care for some cancers. In addition, the Henri and Belinda Termeer Center for Targeted Therapies has developed a significant focus on cancer immunotherapy and enrolling patients in clinical trials.

WHAT CANCER CARE INVOLVES

Radiation Therapy

massgeneral.org/radiationoncology

Radiation therapy uses high energy X-rays or particles to kill cancer cells. The radiation source may come from outside the body with beams aimed at the cancer or from a source implanted inside the body.

The Cancer Center provides treatments found in few other hospitals, including the only proton therapy center in New England, the Francis H. Burr Proton Therapy Center. Proton therapy is very precise radiation therapy that can be concentrated on a tumor with little harm to the surrounding normal tissue. Proton therapy can be a treatment option for areas of the body such as the eye, brain, or spine, where it is especially important to protect normal tissue.

Surgery

massgeneral.org/surgicaloncology

Surgery is used in many ways, including diagnosing cancer, determining the stage of cancer, removing the primary tumor, and relieving symptoms. Our specialized oncology surgeons are experienced in the latest surgical procedures, many of which are done on an outpatient basis.

Clinical trials

massgeneral.org/cancer/trials

Clinical trials for cancer treatment are research studies that test new drugs and procedures that are not yet available as standard treatments. All new treatments start as clinical trials. Many of our patients, including those with the earliest stages of disease, choose to participate in clinical trials. The Cancer Center offers patients access to a wide variety of promising new therapies, including Phase I, II, and III clinical trials. An infusion center to administer early stage trials is available in the Termeer Center. Emerging fields of study include targeted therapies, biological therapy, cancer vaccines, immunotherapy, and gene therapy.

Mass General Cancer Care Equity Program

massgeneral.org/cancer/lazarex *(need new directory)*

The Mass General Cancer Care Equity Program strives to address, understand, and reduce barriers to participation in clinical trials (lack of education and navigation resources, financial burdens, etc.) through a unique combination of research, patient navigation, and community outreach and education.

Inpatient cancer care is delivered on many different inpatient floors at Mass General. If you are admitted to the hospital, your cancer doctor will continue to direct your treatment plan by working with your inpatient care team. The inpatient care team includes the attending cancer doctor, resident doctor or nurse practitioner, staff nurse, case manager, palliative care specialist, physical therapist, dietitian, and social worker. Your inpatient team will coordinate your care and communicate regularly with your outpatient cancer doctor.

RELATED CLINICAL SERVICES

During your treatment, you may interact with other clinical specialists to meet your specific needs. These important clinical services are incorporated into your care plan and are integral to your well-being during cancer care.

Cardiac Oncology | 866-644-8910

massgeneral.org/cancer/cardio-onc

The Cardio-Oncology Program at Mass General is a joint initiative between the Corrigan Minehan Heart Center and the Mass General Cancer Center. It is designed to coordinate care for cancer patients or cancer survivors who have heart disease or are at risk of developing it.

Dental Care | 617-726-1076

massgeneral.org/dental

Patients who are planning or undergoing chemotherapy may be referred to a hospital-based general dentist to manage any dental disease and to reduce the risk of complications.

Fertility | 617-726-8868

massgeneral.org/fertility

Experienced specialists are available to provide consultation and treatment for those facing issues with fertility.

RELATED CLINICAL SERVICES

Katherine A. Gallagher Integrative Therapies Program 617-726-4178

massgeneral.org/cancer/integrative-therapies

The Katherine A. Gallagher Integrative Therapies Program offers free wellness services, such as acupuncture, yoga, massage, music, and art therapy. The programs can help you feel better throughout your cancer experience. Through a wide range of services, you can learn tips for coping with symptoms and stress. These services are designed to enhance quality of life and help manage a broad range of physical and emotional symptoms. Cancer patients and their families use these methods as tools to maintain health and wellness throughout and beyond treatment.

For a complete listing of our upcoming program offerings, please see our [Wellness and Support Calendar at massgeneral.org/cancer/supportservices](https://massgeneral.org/cancer/supportservices).

Lymphedema | 617-643-1306

massgeneral.org/cancer/lymphedema

Lymphedema is swelling caused by fluid that collects in the tissues under the skin. Lymphedema screening is available for women who have been treated for breast cancer. Through early detection and an individualized treatment plan, we strive to optimize management of lymphedema and minimize the burden it creates. If you think you are experiencing symptoms of lymphedema, please discuss it with your care team.

Nutrition | 617-724-4000

massgeneral.org/nutrition

Certified oncology dietitians specialize in one-on-one counseling for patients who want to boost their immune systems, promote healing, control their weight, or manage side effects from cancer treatment therapies.

Palliative Care Program (Outpatient Services) | 617-724-4000

massgeneral.org/cancer/palliativecare

Our palliative care specialists focus on improving the quality of life of people facing serious illness. From the time of diagnosis, we provide expert management of pain and other symptoms, guidance with difficult treatment choices, and emotional and spiritual support for you and your family. Talk with your doctor or nurse for a referral.

My family and I were always given as much time as we needed to have all our questions answered. —Sam, Patient

Physical Therapy | 617-726-2961

massgeneral.org/physical-therapy

Physical and occupational therapists can help you with exercise and conditioning, and also help manage fatigue and lymphedema (swelling) that may develop from cancer treatments. The therapists are located at Mass General sites in Boston, Charlestown, Chelsea, Revere, and Waltham.

Psychiatric Oncology | 617-724-4800

massgeneral.org/cancer/psych-onc

Psychiatrists specializing in the care of oncology patients provide treatment for anxiety, depression, and coping with persistent physical symptoms or emotional challenges surrounding cancer treatment.

Social Work | 617-724-1822

massgeneral.org/cancer/socialwork

Oncology social workers are licensed mental health professionals who provide support for issues that affect you and your family during cancer diagnosis, treatment, and recovery. Each disease center has its own social workers with expertise in your specific disease. They can help you connect with various hospital and community resources, including assistance with finding transportation and temporary lodging.

Smoking Cessation

massgeneral.org/tts/resources

Mass General offers services and programs to help patients and their family members become non-smokers.

SUPPORTIVE CARE SERVICES

We are dedicated to treating the whole person. The physical, psychological, and spiritual needs of patients and their families are all vital to achieving positive cancer care outcomes. We offer a wide variety of education and support resources to help patients and their families cope with the challenges of a cancer diagnosis. We encourage you to take full advantage of them.

MAXWELL V. BLUM CANCER RESOURCE PROGRAM

Support and Education Hub | 617-724-1822

massgeneral.org/cancer/resource-program

Located outside Yawkey 7B, the Hub is intended to be a comforting and welcoming place for patients, their families, and friends to visit. In the Hub, you can learn more about Cancer Center resources and the local area. You can participate in an educational workshop, find information about emotional support, meet and talk with other patients and families, or just take a break and relax.

Education Workshops | 617-724-1822

massgeneral.org/cancer/supportservices

Education workshops share information that can help ease your fear and anxiety. They also let families and friends learn more about what their loved ones are going through. Examples of topics include chemotherapy and nutrition.

For a complete listing of our upcoming program offerings, please see our Wellness and Support Calendar at massgeneral.org/cancer/supportservices.

Spiritual Care | 617-726-2220

massgeneral.org/cancer/chaplaincy

Support is available for persons of all faiths and to those with no religious affiliation.

Illuminations Program | 617-650-1143

massgeneral.org/cancer/illuminations

Illuminations is a rotating art exhibit housed throughout the Mass General Cancer Center and many of its affiliate locations. The exhibit is intended to offer enlightenment and encouragement to patients, families, staff, and friends of the Cancer Center as they receive care, provide care, or accompany loved ones.

Images Boutique | 617-726-3211

massgeneral.org/cancer/images-boutique

The oncology boutique carries a wide variety of specialized products and services, including wigs, hats, breast prostheses, mastectomy products, and lymphedema sleeves. Patients can learn more about skin care and managing hair loss. Our specially trained staff will provide you with personalized advice and assistance, and will teach you ways to minimize and manage the changes in appearance resulting from cancer treatment. They will work with you to create a plan that will help you look and feel your best throughout and following treatment. The boutique is located in the Yawkey Center on the 2nd floor. Ask the staff about the frequent shopping card, which offers additional savings at this boutique, along with other Mass General stores.

The Marjorie E. Korff

Parenting At a Challenging Time (PACT) Program | 617-724-7272

massgeneral.org/cancer/PACT

This program provides individual support for cancer patients who have children in their lives. Working hand-in-hand with parents, PACT's child psychiatrists and child psychologists offer age-specific guidance for helping children cope with a parent's cancer.

Support Groups | 617-724-1822

massgeneral.org/cancer/support-groups

Groups led by oncology social workers provide patients, their family members, and their friends the chance to share information, gain support, and learn how others cope with cancer.

Topics include:

- » Talking to your children about cancer
- » Finding faith and hope
- » Moving forward after cancer treatment

The Social Service Department at Mass General offers many types of support groups, including groups for certain types of cancer, siblings of children with life threatening illnesses, and programs for parents of children with cancer.

For a complete listing of our upcoming program offerings, please see our Wellness and Support Calendar at massgeneral.org/cancer/supportservices.

Survivorship Program | 617-726-4920

massgeneral.org/cancer/survivorship

The Survivorship Program's goal is to promote the health and well-being of patients with cancer following completion of initial therapy. The program provides a wide range of specialists to help patients with the many different challenges and stages of cancer survivorship. Patients meet one-on-one with a clinician to address their concerns and receive a personalized treatment summary. We are launching new initiatives to bridge the gap between primary care and the oncology team and to promote lifestyle interventions that can help patients become healthier in the years after treatment than they were in the years before the cancer was even diagnosed.

Howard Ulfelder, MD, Healing Garden

The Healing Garden is a year-round respite for Cancer Center patients, families, and friends. This rooftop garden allows patients, families, and visitors to enter into a landscaped setting for rest and solace. An enclosed, glazed pavilion provides shelter from the elements. Created as a serene respite for cancer patients and their families, the garden has extraordinary views of the Boston skyline and the Charles River Basin, generous seating, gentle water courses, and plentiful greenery year-round. The garden is accessible from the 8th floor in the Yawkey Center for Outpatient Care.

OTHER CANCER CENTER RESOURCES

The following are some useful resources to help make your journey easier, including emotional and physical support programs, financial counseling, international patient guidance, and other support services.

Financial Counseling | 617-726-2192

Financial counselors can answer any questions about billing and insurance coverage and can help you apply for government assistance if you are having difficulty with medical costs.

International Patient Center | 617-726-2787

massgeneral.org/international

The International Patient Center facilitates the care of all international patients seeking treatment at the Cancer Center. It is located on the 1st floor of the Blake Building.

Connect with the Cancer Center's Online Resources and Community

Website

massgeneral.org/cancer

Facebook

[facebook.com/MGHCC](https://www.facebook.com/MGHCC)

Twitter

twitter.com/mghcancercenter



Px

cancercenterpx.org

Px is a patient experience initiative at the Cancer Center. The purpose of Px is to meet the emotional needs of patients and to provide patients, their families, and friends with a simple way to learn about and connect with the various resources available at the Cancer Center.

This is the first place in my travels where I was provided with answers and with hope. I was not another number, but rather an individual with individual needs. —Rob, Patient

Medical Interpreters | 617-726-6966

massgeneral.org/interpreters

Non-English, limited English-proficient, deaf, and hard-of-hearing patients and family members have the right to free medical interpretation services or auxiliary aids and services. Your doctor's office can schedule an interpreter or the aids and services you need, or you can contact the interpreters directly.

Patient Advocacy | 617-726-3370

massgeneral.org/advocacy

Patient advocates look into and help resolve patient/family complaints. If you are not satisfied with your care or if there are communication issues, a patient advocate can help you. They can also answer your questions about confidentiality and assist you in getting information about your care.

Patient and Family Advisory Council (PFAC)

Each member of the Patient and Family Advisory Council has been touched by cancer. Some have survived cancer, some are receiving treatment today, and others have helped their loved ones fight this disease. As Council volunteers, the group provides feedback to the Mass General Cancer Center's leadership to enhance the patient care experience by ensuring that the voices of patients and families are represented.

Oncology Financial Care Coordination Team

The Oncology Financial Care Coordination Team provides guidance and assistance if you are unsure of your insurance coverage and pre-authorizations. This specialized oncology team works with your insurance company to ensure your infusion and supportive care treatments are covered and approved. If you have questions or concerns about your coverage, please speak with your treatment team for more information.

Transportation, Temporary Lodging, and Resource Support | 617-724-0295

An Oncology Resource Specialist can answer questions about transportation options for cancer patients and local lodging for patients and their families during treatment. We offer a variety of cancer support groups, but if needed, the resource specialist can investigate if there are any offered closer to your home.



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CANCER CENTER COMMUNITY PROVIDERS

Through our network of collaborations, patients have access to the latest cancer treatments and targeted therapies, early phase clinical trials, timely referrals for second opinions, and improved coordination of care.

Visit massgeneral.org/cancer/community or ask your care team for more information about what services are offered at each site.

WAYS TO GIVE

Donate Blood or Platelets

Help save a life by donating blood to the Mass General Blood Donor Center, one of the largest full-service blood transfusion and donation services in the country. Call **617-726-8177** or visit massgeneral.org/blooddonor.

Make a Donation

At the Mass General Cancer Center, we rely on philanthropic donations to help advance the amazing work our scientists and clinicians are doing every day. From innovative research to better understand and combat cancer to supportive care programs aimed at improving the quality of life of our patients, our work would not be possible without the support of many generous donors. Learn more about how your gift can make a difference for cancer patients and their families by calling **617-726-2200** or visiting giving.massgeneral.org/cancer. You can also share your story at fundraise4mgh.org.

Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center

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617-726-5130

massgeneral.org/cancer



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