

Cancer Rehabilitation

Cancer is the abnormal growth of cells, and its symptoms vary with the type and extent of the disease.

Cancer may develop as a result of a complex mix of factors related to environment, lifestyle and heredity.

Prognosis is advised by the medical team, and will depend on multiple factors such as the disease stage and type.

How is it treated?

Cancer is managed by a team of cancer specialists, who may recommend treatments such as surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. When cancer and its treatment result in functional limitations, patients may be referred to rehabilitation professionals such as physiotherapist, occupational therapist, and speech therapist to manage potential treatment side effects, so as to facilitate functional recovery and wellbeing.

What does rehabilitation involve?

The goals of cancer rehabilitation vary based on patients' individual treatment needs.

It may be for prevention of future complications; restoration of lost functions; support in psychosocial and physical needs; and/or symptom management.

Physiotherapy can help cancer patients by optimizing their fitness levels, maintaining or improving their functional ability, prescribing exercises and suitable walking aids, as well as equipping caregivers with the necessary skills.

A Physiotherapist can also help with the management of some common cancer side effects such as musculoskeletal pain, neuropathy, lymphedema, breathlessness and cancer related fatigue.

An Occupational Therapist helps patients to maximize performance and safety in activities of daily living. This can be done through retraining of relevant skills, education on symptom management to enhance participation, caregiver's training, as well as equipment prescription.

An Occupational Therapist also helps to facilitate engagement in meaningful activities, such as leisure, to improve psychosocial wellbeing.

A Speech Therapist may assess and manage swallowing and/or communication problems.

Some cancer-specific services we provide include the lymphedema management program, pre-habilitative program for colorectal cancer patients, and group education and exercise classes for breast cancer patients during and after treatment.

Initial assessment will be completed by therapists to assess the patient's mobility and function. This will determine the treatment needs and required intervention. A multidisciplinary approach will be adopted to tailor treatment plans to facilitate discharge planning from the hospital. Subsequently, relevant outpatient services (individual/group) will be referred to upon discharge as necessary.

Useful links

[National University Cancer Institute, Singapore](#)

[Singapore Cancer Society](#)