

What is metastatic cancer?

Metastatic means the cancer has spread to a different body part from where it started.

Cancer that has spread to another area is given the same name as the original cancer. For example, a breast cancer that spread to the liver is called metastatic breast cancer, not liver cancer. It started in the breast and any treatments given are for breast cancer.

There are treatments for all patients with metastatic cancer. The goal of these treatments is to stop or slow the growth of the cancer or to relieve symptoms caused by it. In some cases, treatments for metastatic cancer may help prolong life.

With metastatic cancer, curing the cancer may not be a realistic goal. However, it might still be a hope or dream. It is reasonable to ask your doctor if curing the cancer is the goal.

The goals of metastatic cancer treatment may include:

- To have the fewest possible side effects from the cancer and the cancer treatment
- For the person with cancer to have the best quality of life
- For the person with cancer to live as long as possible

Focus on well being:

- There is help for adjusting to living with cancer. Ask your care team for their assistance, see resources for emotional support below.
- You may function fully for some time, discuss with your care providers how to live your best quality of life including minimizing pain and minimizing fatigue.
- Your nutrition, especially protein-intake, is important. Many local cancer support organizations have nutrition courses, and your cancer center may have a dietician available.
- If you are having problems achieving the quality of life you desire, consider asking your care providers about palliative care to help.
- Should you have financial concerns, or think you may in the future, share this with your care providers. They may have resources to assist. See Resources for Financial Support below.
- Discuss with your care team any physical challenges you have now or that you may have in the future, they may be able to help, or provide you with ideas to postpone or minimize the effect.
- Having all your care providers be in communication with each other coordinating your care, will provide you the best possible quality of life.

Metastatic cancer can be difficult to cope with. You are not alone. Feelings that are uncomfortable are normal and can be helped. Let your care providers and others close to you know.

Reach out for support from family, friends, support groups, peer mentors.

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [Cancer.Net, What is Metastasis?](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Coping with Metastatic Cancer](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Understanding Metastatic Cancer](#)
- [NIH, National Cancer Institute, Metastatic Cancer](#)
- [NIH, National Cancer Institute, Metastatic Cancer Research](#)
- [Metavivor, Metastatic Breast Cancer Research, Support and Awareness](#)

Resources for Emotional Support:

- <http://cancer-help.me/communitycancerresourcecenters>
- [Imerman Angels](#)
- [NIH National Cancer Institute, Support Search](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [Cancer.Net, ¿Qué es la metástasis?](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Sobrellevar el cáncer metastático](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional del Cáncer, Cáncer metastático](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Cómo entender el cáncer avanzado, el cáncer metastático y la metástasis en los huesos](#)

Videos for patients/family/caretakers

- [CancerCare.org, Living with Metastatic Breast Cancer](#)

Resources for Financial Support:

- [PAN, Foundation, fundfinder](#)
- [NIH National Cancer Institute, Support Search](#)