

Giving Care

care and education
for cancer patients and those who love them



MAPLE TREE CANCER ALLIANCE

Remission

Very rarely, will a physician ever pronounce someone as "cured" from cancer. Rather, the patient may go into cancer remission, which is a decrease or disappearance of the signs and symptoms of cancer. Because cancer is considered to be a chronic disease, the patient will continually need to check back with their oncologist to see if it has returned or not.

There are two types of Remission:

Partial Remission: The cancer is still there, but the tumor is smaller. In the cases of liquid cancers, like leukemia, there simply may be less of that particular cancer in the body.

Complete Remission: There is no evidence of cancer in the body.

In the case of complete remission, some patients question why they are not considered cured of their cancer. The reason for this is because there is no way for an oncologist to know if all the cancer cells in the body are gone. Some may remain undetected for years after the cessation of treatment.

If cancer returns after a period of remission, it is called a cancer recurrence. Generally, if cancer does come back, it typically happens within the first five years following the first cancer diagnosis.

Although remission should bring on feelings of relief, fear of cancer recurrence often brings on more uncertainty and anxiety than ever before. A recent breast cancer survivor put it this way, "When I went into remission, I felt like I was standing alone and naked in the woods."

During cancer treatment, patients do many things to be proactive about their health. They have several doctor's appointments each week, treatment schedules, and medications. If they are lucky, they have an active support team around to offer encouragement. However, during remission, doctor visits may be up to 6 months apart. Support systems often dissipate. The patient is left feeling alone and scared.

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Churches can offer support to these patients in many simple and tangible ways.

- Call the patient to see how they are doing.
- Pray over the patient for continued healing.
- Send cards or texts of encouragement to the patient.
- Acknowledge that it may be a hard time emotionally for the patient, and ask if they need to talk about it.
- Emphasize the positive things in the patient's life.
- Ask when scans and tests are and let the patient know you are praying for a positive result.
- Use Scripture to encourage the patient to persevere when their faith is weak.

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