

Life After BMT

Updates from the Blood or Marrow Transplant Survivor Study

BMTSS Progress

UAB INSTITUTE FOR CANCER
OUTCOMES & SURVIVORSHIP
The University of Alabama at Birmingham

We hope this Spring 2025 newsletter finds you well and that you and your families are staying safe and healthy. BMTSS is the Blood or Marrow Transplant Survivor Study. The BMTSS is currently ongoing at the University of Minnesota, the University of Alabama at Birmingham, and City of Hope. You are receiving this newsletter because you are a BMTSS participant. In this newsletter, we will provide information on the topic of frailty. As a reminder, all of our older newsletters are available on our website: <https://www.uab.edu/medicine/icos/icos-research/bmt-study>.

This newsletter will give you an update on the study's progress and let you know how your information is helping us to make further progress in understanding life after BMT. We do not require any action in response to this newsletter unless you have moved or changed your phone number. **We encourage you to update your contact information by sending us an email at bmtstudy@uabmc.edu or calling us at 855-903-2136.** Thank you so much for participating in BMTSS and helping us with this important research!

[Spring 2025]

For More Information:

Call:

855-903-2136

Mail:

Blood or Marrow Transplant
Long-Term Follow-Up Study
1600 7th Ave South
Lowder 500
Birmingham, AL 35233

Email:

bmtstudy@uabmc.edu

Recent BMTSS Publications

Blood or marrow transplantation (BMT) is used to treat blood cancers and other serious illnesses. People who received a transplant can be at risk for developing skin cancers. The different types of skin cancers include basal cell carcinoma (BCC), squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and melanoma.

A recent study from the BMTSS evaluated 3,880 BMT survivors. On average, the BMT survivors who participated in this study were 44 years old at transplant, and about 9.5 years had elapsed between their transplant and the time when they completed the BMTSS survey. Overall, 605 participants reported that they had developed one or more types of a skin cancer. The most common type was BCC (321 participants), followed by 231 participants who reported SCC and 78 had developed melanoma. The study found that about 27 out of every 100 BMT survivors developed skin cancer by the time they were 30 years from their transplant. People were more likely to get skin cancer after their BMT if they were over the age of 50 at the time of transplant, were male, had chronic graft-vs-host disease, took medicines that suppress the immune system (post-transplant immunosuppression), or received monoclonal antibody therapy for their cancer treatment. Additionally, people who were younger than age 50 when they received total body irradiation had an elevated risk of developing BCC. Conversely, people who identified as Black, Hispanic, or multiracial had a significantly lower risk of developing skin cancer after transplant. These findings highlight the importance of regular skin check-ups for BMT survivors. Talk to your doctor about a plan that fits your needs.

Broman KK, Meng Q, Holmqvist A, Balas N, Richman J, Landier W, Hageman L, Ross E, Bosworth A, Te HS, Hollenquest B, Wong FL, Bhatia R, Forman SJ, Armenian SH, Weisdorf DJ, Bhatia S. Incidence of and Risk Factors for Cutaneous Malignant Neoplasms After Blood or Marrow Transplant. JAMA Dermatol. 2025 Mar 1;161(3):265-273. doi: 10.1001/jamadermatol.2024.5129.PMID: 39693095

Ask the Researchers

We received several great questions since our last newsletter. Here we share some answers with you. Please send your questions to the BMTSS Study Staff by emailing bmtstudy@uabmc.edu. Although the study is still collecting data, we will do a preliminary analysis regarding one to two topics or questions that we receive, and publish the results in the next newsletter.

Question: What is Mental Health?

Mental health includes emotional, psychological, and social well-being, and the ability to handle stress, reach our goals, learn and work well, and contribute to our community.

Mental health is a critical, yet often overlooked, aspect of care for cancer survivors. While the physical toll of cancer is widely acknowledged, many survivors continue to face emotional and psychological challenges long after treatment ends. Anxiety and depression are common, as survivors navigate the uncertainty of their health and the lasting impact of their diagnosis. These mental health struggles can affect their quality of life, relationships, and even adherence to follow-up care.



Where to get help:

- **988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline** (Call or Text: 988): <http://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>
- **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration** (call 1-800-662-HELP [4357]): <https://findtreatment.gov/>
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** (call 1-800-950-6264): <https://www.nami.org/>



Ask the Researchers Continued...

Common Mental Health Issues:

Issue	Warning Signs	Treatment Options
Depression	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Trouble doing everyday things• Begin to rely on alcohol or drugs• Sleeping too much or having a lot of trouble sleeping• Feeling restless, agitated, worthless,	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psychotherapy (cognitive behavioral therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy)• Medications• Light therapy
Anxiety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge• Constant worrying about many different things• Having trouble relaxing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Psychotherapy (cognitive behavioral therapy, and interpersonal therapy)• Medications• Mindfulness-based activities (yoga, music therapy, and reflexology)
Social Isolation and Loneliness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of social connections/friends• Limited time spent with others• Not having meaningful relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Join a support group• Sign up for activities and classes• Spend time with others

Sources:

<https://www.cancer.org/cancer/survivorship/coping/understanding-psychosocial-support-services.html>

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/feelings>

https://www.cancercare.org/publications/279-coping_with_sadness_and_depression_after_cancer

Preventive Health

Preventing HPV-related Cancers

The recommendations below may be helpful for many BMT survivors; however, survivors should check with their physicians before making any of these suggested changes.

HPV Vaccination. HPV (human papillomavirus) can cause several types of cancer, including cervical, vaginal, vulvar, anal, penile, and oropharyngeal (throat) cancers. The HPV vaccine is effective in preventing HPV-related cancers. The HPV vaccine is recommended for people 9 to 26 years of age. People 27 to 45 years of age may also get the vaccine when recommended by their healthcare provider. People who had a BMT should get the 3-dose HPV vaccine series (or get it again if they had it before transplant) starting 6 months after their transplant. It's important to know that HPV vaccine prevents new HPV infections but does not treat existing infections. The HPV vaccine works best when it is given before someone is exposed to HPV.



Cervical Cancer Screenings. The goal of screening for cervical cancer is to find abnormal cells and treat them before they turn into cervical cancer. Current cervical cancer screening recommendations for women who received an allogeneic BMT include yearly cervical cancer screenings for at least 3 years post-BMT, then screenings every 3 to 5 years for life. Women who received an autologous BMT should get cervical cancer screening according to general population recommendations: every 3 to 5 years beginning at age 21 years, with the type of screening based on their current age, including an upper age limit of 65 years in women whose past screenings were normal.

More Information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd/hpv/hcp/recommendations.html>

<https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/causes-prevention/risk/infectious-agents/hpv-and-cancer>

<https://www.cdc.gov/hpv/vaccines/index.html>

<https://my.clevelandclinic.org/health/treatments/21613-hpv-vaccine>

<https://www.cancer.gov/types/cervical/screening>