

Another piece of the cancer puzzle, part two

Cancer treatment can be taxing enough. Surgery, chemotherapy, radiation, port management – they're all possibilities.

But your treatment plan could also send you to physical, occupational or speech therapy. [OSF HealthCare physical therapists Kelly Bogowith and Susan Young](#) are shedding some light on what to expect.

Conditions associated with cancer that could require therapy include lymphedema, pelvic floor dysfunction, neuropathy and fatigue. Bogowith and Young outline some symptoms and which symptoms warrant a call to which therapist.

Physical therapy

Cancer survivors should talk to a physical therapist if they're experiencing:

- Joint pain, especially in the neck, shoulders and back
- Difficulty getting around due to being out of shape
- Swelling in the arms, legs, breasts or torso, a sign of lymphedema
- Constipation or incontinence, signs of pelvic floor dysfunction
- Tingling, numbness, weakness or pain in your hands or feet, signs of neuropathy
- Tiredness that is more frequent, intense or lasts longer than normal, signs of cancer-related fatigue

Occupational therapy

- Vision issues
- Dizziness or lack of balance
- Problems completing everyday tasks, such as using your hand and arm to grab an object in the kitchen. Bogowith says a health care provider could recommend equipment, like a shower seat, or suggest modifying your home, like moving items from high shelves to low shelves.

Speech therapy

- Difficulty speaking, including your pitch
- Difficulty swallowing
- Memory problems, such as forgetting the order you need to perform tasks in

Tips and tricks

Bogowith and Young have treated plenty of cancer survivors, so they know how exhausting recovery can be. Aside from the usual advice (listen to your care team, and take advantage of community resources, they say), the two always try to keep spirits up.

"I think trying to keep a positive outlook as best you can is important. That's not always easy, but I think mindset is important," Bogowith says. "Also, good nutrition and proper rest."

Says Young: "A lot of times when people have cancer, they tend to isolate themselves. Or they get isolated by their circle of friends because the friends don't know what to do for them. Just reach out to make connections. Don't isolate yourself."

Learn more

Read more about how OSF supports [rehabilitation](#) and [cancer](#) patients. Cancer care at OSF includes the [OSF HealthCare Cancer Institute](#) in Peoria, Illinois.