

# Needs and Lifestyle Challenges of Adolescents and Young Adults With Cancer:

## Summary of an Institute of Medicine and Livestrong Foundation Workshop

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**Background:** Among adolescents and young adults (AYAs) in the United States, cancer is the leading cause of disease-related death. AYA survivors face numerous short- and long-term health and psychosocial issues, as well as increased risk for behavioral and lifestyle challenges, including poor diet, low physical activity (PA), and substance abuse. Many of these behaviors are modifiable, but gaps in care serve as barriers for AYA survivors.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this article is to (a) raise awareness of AYAs' increased risk for poor diet, low PA, and substance abuse; (b) examine previous interventions addressing these issues; and (c) provide recommendations for future directions.

**Methods:** This article summarizes a workshop coordinated by the Institute of Medicine and the Livestrong Foundation to address AYA survivors' needs and ways to enhance their quality of care.

**Findings:** Oncology nurses can promote the inclusion of lifestyle behaviors in survivorship care plans of AYA patients and serve as a valuable resource in improving AYA care on a larger scale. In addition, oncology nurse researchers may offer greater understanding of AYA patients' and survivors' needs and best practices by conducting much-needed research with this understudied population.

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Cancer is the leading cause of disease-related death among adolescents and young adults (AYAs) (National Cancer Institute [NCI], 2014). An estimated 70,000 AYAs aged from 15–39 years are diagnosed with cancer annually, which is eight times more than children younger than age 15 years (Zebrack, Mathews-Bradshaw, & Siegel, 2010). AYA survivors face numerous short- and long-term health and psychosocial issues (Oeffinger et al., 2006; Robison et al., 2005). These individuals are also

at increased risk for many behavioral and lifestyle challenges, such as low physical activity (PA), poor diet, and substance abuse (Klosky et al., 2012). However, these challenges can be addressed through educational and behavioral interventions.

Unfortunately, a significant gap exists for AYA patients because few cancer treatment and survivorship programs tend to their needs. NCI has recognized this as a health disparity requiring special attention (Zebrack et al., 2010). A key challenge is that AYAs do not fit neatly into either adult or pediatric oncology