The success of Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care is defined by the term “community”. We are a community of dedicated departments and individuals who come together to form a multi-disciplinary team of caregivers, working together to provide our patients coordinated and compassionate care. We are also active participants in the health of our greater Portland community by partnering with local organizations such as Wayside Food Programs in Portland that provides everything from warm meals to health education for community members.

Our cancer program was formally evaluated in March during our three-year accreditation survey from the Commission on Cancer, the governing body for cancer treatment programs in the United States. At the conclusion of the survey, Northern Light Mercy Hospital received praise for our data reporting as well as for the quality of our pathology services. We were also awarded for our high rate of patient participation in clinical trials, including research conducted by Northern Light Mercy Hospital physicians and national multi-institutional trials. This recognition is a truly remarkable testament to our desire to provide the best opportunities for our patients.

I would like to thank all of Northern Light Mercy Hospital’s many dedicated team members who touch the lives of cancer patients in the Greater Portland community. I encourage you to keep reading this report to learn more about the extensive services and exceptional care provided by our cancer program.

Sincerely,

Charlie Therrien, FACHE
Northern Light Mercy Hospital President and CEO
Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care offers complete care for most adult cancers, including both solid tumors and hematologic malignancies like leukemia and lymphoma. Northern Light Mercy Hospital physicians are available for consultation in medical oncology, surgical oncology, and breast surgery. Additional services include

- Breast imaging
- Benign hematology
- Clinical trials
- Colonoscopy and endoscopy
- Diagnostic imaging including CT, MRI, and PET-CT
- Financial counseling
- Genetic testing
- Infusion therapy including chemotherapy and biotherapy
- Interventional radiology
- Nutritional assessment and management
- Ostomy and wound care
- Palliative care
- Patient navigation
- Referral to collaborating physicians in ENT, radiation oncology, thoracic surgery, and urology
- Rehabilitative services: Physical and occupational therapy, speech therapy, and a lymphedema clinic
- Social work services
- Survivorship care

Types of cancers cared for by Mercy physicians in 2017
Northern Light Mercy Hospital a High Performer

The Commission on Cancer (CoC) measures compliance with current CoC standards using quality reporting tools like the Cancer Program Practice Profile Reports. We are proud that our program met or exceeded all of the required performance expectations of the Commission on Cancer for breast and colon cancer for the most recent reporting year (2016).

Measures highlighted in green indicate that Northern Light Mercy Hospital’s performance was higher than the national average for all CoC accredited cancer programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accountability Measure</th>
<th>CoC Benchmark</th>
<th>Northern Light Mercy Hospital</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radiation is administered within one year (365 days) of diagnosis for women under the age of 70 receiving breast conservation surgery for breast cancer</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamoxifen or third generation aromatase inhibitor is recommended or administered within one year (365 days) of diagnosis for women with AJCC T1c or stage IB-III hormone receptor positive breast cancer</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>97.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radiation therapy is recommended or administered following any mastectomy within 1 year (365 days) of diagnosis of breast cancer for women with &gt;= 4 positive regional lymph nodes</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At least 12 regional lymph nodes are removed and pathologically examined for resected colon cancer</td>
<td>85%</td>
<td>85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjuvant chemotherapy is recommended, or administered within four months (120 days) of diagnosis for patients under the age of 80 with AJCC stage III (lymph node positive) colon cancer</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Northern Light Mercy Hospital

Oncology Nutrition

Joan Lavery-McLaughlin, RDN, CSO, LD, is a registered dietitian nutritionist and board-certified specialist in Oncology Nutrition. Before becoming a registered dietitian, she worked as a professional chef for many years. Her extensive culinary background combines perfectly with her passion for nutrition and healthy living to provide patients with a well-balanced approach to healthy eating and disease prevention. Joan has been providing dietitian services as part of a multi-disciplinary team within Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care since 2008, treating cancer patients with a wide variety of nutrition-related concerns. She noted that optimizing a patient’s nutrition can improve treatment outcomes, reduce the risk of side effects and complications, and improve quality of life. Medical nutrition therapy is offered to all Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care patients and may include:

- Nutritional assessment and development of personalized nutrition plans based on assessment findings and food preferences.
- Calculation of the deficit between nutrient requirements and dietary intake.
- Monitoring patient progress during treatment by assessing weight changes and relevant labs, and reviewing dietary intake.
- Educating patients, families, and caregivers about dietary strategies to promote health and reduce toxicity of treatment.
- Providing information and support for the patients, families, and caregivers about appropriate nutrition before, during, and after treatment.
- Developing post-treatment survivorship nutrition plans to maximize health and well-being.

“I really enjoy helping patients and their families translate the science of nutrition into practical solutions for managing treatment related side effects and optimizing health throughout treatment and beyond.”

Joan Lavery-McLaughlin, Registered Dietitian Nutritionist
Lifestyle Recommendations for Cancer Prevention

- Consume a plant-based diet including a variety of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, and legumes.
- Avoid sugary drinks and foods, and limit consumption of energy-dense foods (processed foods high in added sugar, low in fiber, and high in fat).
- Limit consumption of red meats and avoid processed meats.
- Be as lean as possible without becoming underweight.
- Be physically active for at least 30 minutes every day.
- Limit consumption of salty foods and foods processed with salt (sodium).
- Don’t use supplements in place of a healthy diet to protect against cancer.
- Scientists estimate that following these recommendations could help prevent at least one-third of all cancers. Source: American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR). For more information visit: www.AICR.org
A Band of Angels

Wendy Sargent, a native of East Winthrop and current resident of Gorham, works at the University of New England where she helps manage student activities. It’s a job that she loves.

Her entire career has been devoted to helping students acclimate and grow during their formative college years. But it was those very same students, who she is charged with helping, who became an incredible source of support and inspiration throughout her battle against breast cancer.

“I stayed positive and focused—I am going to beat this,” she told herself after she received her first referral to Northern Light Mercy Hospital from InterMed, and then later when she was officially diagnosed with stage three breast cancer in November of 2017.

It was scary for Wendy to hear the word “cancer” when she was diagnosed. She resolved, however, to focus on the positive. Wendy kept a notebook in her office that included a short-term bucket list filled with things she could do in the coming months to make the most out of life. Her son’s wedding, tubing down the Saco River, fun day trips, and visiting the waterfalls of Grafton Notch State Park topped her list.

The student, parent, and staff support she received outside of the clinical setting was critical to her successful recovery, so too was the coordination of her care team at Northern Light Mercy Hospital. Following a double mastectomy and the related treatments, she remains very positive and credits her care at Northern Light Mercy Hospital for saving her life.

Wendy stressed the word “team” when referring to the many caring providers and staff that helped her along the way. She cited the close coordination between doctors, nurses, and social workers and the resulting ease of screening, diagnosis, and eventual treatment as true difference makers on her road to recovery.

“Team Mercy is a band of angels doing great work with care, compassion, friendliness, and kindness—all while being professional and thorough,” Wendy reflected. “Everyone at Mercy was amazing from day one. From mammogram, sonogram, MRI’s, bone scans, and the breast and oncology teams, to lymphedema, physical therapy, and more—I received excellent care and a true team effort. Everyone connected and worked together.”

She also highlighted the location where she received treatments and met with her physicians. For her, the Northern Light Mercy Hospital, Fore River campus was a serene place that helped her get through her treatments.
"Water views, natural light, and a modern facility uplifted and inspired me. It made a difference in my recovery. Looking over the river, even in the dead of winter—it’s a beautiful spot,” said Wendy as she received one of her antibody treatments in the oncology suite last year.

From consultations between Suzanne Hoekstra, MD, and the medical oncologist, to the descriptions of the treatment plan and everything in between, communication was key in Wendy’s journey to recovery.

“The communication at Mercy was excellent,” Wendy recalled. “Everyone made sure that I knew what was going on every step of the way—across the continuum of care.”

She has seen disconnects that can sometimes happen in healthcare coordination and she was very grateful for the way everyone she interacted with treated her as, “a person, not a chart.”

“Everyone is connected. I think that’s why I was able to bounce back the way I did,” Wendy said.

While getting back to normal is Wendy’s new goal, giving back to the community is important to her. She’s encouraging people to speak with their doctors about cancer concerns and she’s taking on challenges that speak to her new outlook on life, such as participating in the Dempsey Challenge—an annual run/walk that benefits cancer support services in the greater Portland and Lewiston areas.

Thanks to her determined spirit, her disciplined approach to her treatments, and her team at Northern Light Mercy Hospital, Wendy’s post-treatment life has been full of blessings, especially being able to check off the biggest box on her bucket list—attending her son’s wedding nearly one year after first being diagnosed with cancer.
Starting a new chemotherapy drug can be a daunting experience for our patients. Will the drug work? What will the side effects be? Can I afford these medications? And if the chemotherapy medication is taken orally at home, then the responsibility of making sure the medication is taken correctly adds an additional burden. At Northern Light Mercy Hospital, we recognize how complicated treating cancer can be. It’s our mission to ease the burden on patients and families, keeping the focus on the patient’s health and wellbeing.

Each year, more oral chemotherapy drugs become available in addition to oral options for immune therapy, targeted therapy, and hormone therapy—all designed to treat a variety of cancers. At any given time, Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care has up to 115 patients taking any one of more than 20 oral anti-cancer agents. It was in response to an obvious need for additional support for this community of patients that oncology nurse Catherine Moores, RN, BSN, was inspired to create a formal program for monitoring and supporting adherence to oral chemotherapy.

The basic tenets of the program, which is based on Oncology Nursing Society standards of care, include building strong nurse-patient relationships, repeating information for better communication, ensuring the safety of the medication, and removing financial barriers. “We’re protecting their finances, protecting their health, and helping to treat their cancer effectively. It gives them the emotional support they need through this journey,” Catherine said.
The program, for which Catherine shares responsibility with colleague Renee MacPherson RN, ADN, starts with a teaching session for each patient. The three-hour session includes time with a nurse, social worker, dietician, and financial counselor. Once the medication has started, Catherine and Renee make weekly phone calls to each patient to check in during the first month, slowly decreasing the frequency of phone calls over time. The nurses also meet with patients in person when they come in for follow-up visits with their oncologist. Frequent communication with pharmacists from Northern Light Pharmacy, which dispenses the medications, adds another level of oversight. Since its inception in 2014, the oral chemotherapy monitoring program has been an integral part of Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care treatment services. Catherine and Renee shared the success of their program with a poster presentation titled “Improving Oral Chemotherapy Adherence (Catherine Moores, Renee MacPherson)” at the fall meeting of the Northern New England Clinical Oncology Society in 2017 (October 27-28, Stowe, VT).

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Catherine noted that while oral anti-cancer therapy does have its drawbacks—including increased patient responsibility, cost, and under-reporting of side effects—it also has many advantages. These include increased convenience, less time spent in the provider’s office for treatment, and reduced invasiveness of treatment. For the many patients who are prescribed oral therapy, an effective monitoring program can improve efficacy and reduce complications, ER visits, and hospitalizations. “It’s just as important for me as pushing [intravenous] chemo,” said Catherine. “It’s good patient care. That’s why I love Mercy; I feel like we all treat every patient here like they’re a family member.”
Interventional Radiology

Maximizing Outcomes with a Minimally Invasive Approach

Radiologists play an important role in interpreting imaging studies and advising on their use, but rarely have an opportunity to meet the patients. For most patients, the presence of a radiologist as part of their multi-disciplinary care team is a quiet one. Interventional radiology (IR), in which imaging techniques are used to guide diagnostic or therapeutic procedures, is an increasingly important exception.

“There’s been a nationwide shift moving low-acuity procedures out of the operating room, into IR suites,” said David Langdon, MD, chief of Radiology at Northern Light Mercy Hospital. Dr. Langdon, who completed his fellowship in IR at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, is one of four radiologists offering both inpatient and outpatient IR procedures for the diagnosis and treatment of cancer at Northern Light Mercy Hospital.

Our IR department provides a full range of services in a dedicated space at our State Street campus. Procedures are performed in one of two fluoroscopy (x-ray equipped) suites or with ultrasound or CT scan guidance, if needed. Procedural sedation is available to ensure patient comfort and a dedicated recovery area with nurses trained in pre- and post-procedure counseling adds to the patient experience.
Use of IR techniques over standard surgical procedures allows several advantages to our patients, which include reduced invasiveness, reduced pain, reduced cost, as well as shorter recovery time and earlier initiation of cancer therapy post-procedure.

Dr. Langdon, who came to Mercy 18 years ago following a position as assistant professor of radiology at Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center, has found the practice setting well-suited to interventional radiology, “That’s where a good community hospital can excel—by bringing a community-based practice that’s accessible to the public and particularly accessible to those who have less ability to pay. I think Northern Light Mercy Hospital has done a great job at doing that. I don’t have to look at people’s insurance; I can just carry forward.”

List of Services

- Biopsies of the trunk and extremities
- Venous access
- Nerve blocks for chronic pain
- Feeding tubes
- Radiofrequency and microwave ablation of solid tumors
- Embolization therapy
- Palliative treatment of bowel and biliary obstruction
- Diagnostic and therapeutic paracentesis and thoracentesis
About Northern Light Health

We make healthcare work for you.

At Northern Light Health, we’re building a better approach to healthcare because we believe people deserve access to care that works for them. As an integrated health delivery system serving Maine, we’re raising the bar with no-nonsense solutions that are leading the way to a healthier future for our state. Our more than 12,000 team members are committed to making healthcare work for you: our patients, communities, and employees.

Our locations are comprised of Maine hospitals, health care centers, continuing care, home care and hospice facilities from Portland to Presque Isle and Greenville to Blue Hill. Our care organizations and affiliates are here to ensure immediate access to services is always available close by when you need them most. Northern Light Health Foundation is here to help you make a positive difference for your loved ones and community. Together, we are setting new standards of healthcare.

Find a provider
Visit northernlighthealth.org/providers to search for a specific care giver or find a provider with a specialty to meet your needs.

Make a gift
Visit northernlighthealth.org/foundation to experience the many philanthropic events and programs designed to provide the highest standard of quality healthcare to our communities.
We’re here for you.

Learn more about Northern Light Mercy Cancer Care, our philosophy of personalized care for individuals, and get to know our physicians and caring staff at northernlighthhealth.org/Mercy-Hospital.

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