



QUESTIONS TO ASK MY DOCTOR

ABOUT MY CANCER

Adapted with permission from the American Cancer Society



If you or a loved one has been diagnosed with cancer, you probably have a lot of questions and concerns. Learning about your disease and how it's treated is important to help you move forward. Learning more about your diagnosis and treatment plan gives you the ability to take an active role in your cancer care planning. You might need some help. It's important for you to be able to talk frankly and openly with your cancer care team. They want to answer all of your questions, no matter how minor they might seem to you, but it helps if you know what to ask. Here are some questions you can use to help you better understand your cancer and your options. Don't be afraid to take notes and tell the doctors or nurses when you don't understand what they're saying.

The questions are grouped by where you are in the process of cancer treatment. Not all of these questions will apply to you, but they should help get you started.

For more information on the type of cancer you have, please contact your American Cancer Society toll-free at **877-970-7848**. For information about cancer clinical trials, please visit www.LearnAboutClinicalTrials.org.

WHEN YOU'RE TOLD YOU HAVE CANCER

1. Exactly what kind of cancer do I have?
2. Is there a pathology report? May I see it? May I have a copy?
3. Where is the cancer located?

4. Has the cancer spread beyond where it started?

5. What's the cancer's stage? What does that mean?

6. How does the stage of my cancer affect my treatment options and long-term outcome (prognosis)?

7. What are my chances of survival, based on my cancer, as you see it?

8. How much experience do you have treating this type of cancer?

9. Will I need other tests before we can decide on treatment?

10. What are my treatment choices?

11. What treatment do you recommend and why?

12. What's the goal of my treatment?

13. Are other members of my family at risk? Should I think about genetic testing?

14. Should I get a second opinion? How do I do that?

15. What support services are available (transportation, lodging)?

ASKING ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

1. What is a cancer clinical trial?

2. Why should I consider a cancer clinical trial?

3. How do I know if I am eligible for a clinical trial?

4. What are the risks and benefits of participating in a clinical trial?

5. How long will a clinical trial last?

6. Can I stop participating in a clinical trial at any time?

WHEN DECIDING ON A TREATMENT PLAN

1. What are the chances the cancer will come back after this treatment?

2. What would we do if the treatment doesn't work or if the cancer comes back?

3. Will I be able to have children after treatment?

4. How much will I have to pay for treatment? Will my insurance cover any of it?

5. How long will treatment last? What will it involve?

6. Where will treatment be done?

7. What risks and side effects should I expect, and when might they occur?

8. What can I do to reduce the side effects of the treatment?

9. How will treatment affect my daily activities? Can I still exercise?

10. Will I be able to work during treatment?

11. Will I lose my hair? If so, what can I do about it?

12. Will the treatment hurt? Will I have any scars?

BEFORE TREATMENT

1. What should I do to get ready for treatment?

2. Will I need blood transfusions?

3. Should I change what I eat or make other lifestyle changes?

DURING TREATMENT

1. How will we know if the treatment is working?
2. Is there anything I can do to help manage side effects?
3. What symptoms or side effects should I tell you about right away?
4. How can I reach you on nights, holidays, or weekends?
5. Do I need to change what I eat during treatment?
6. Are there any limits on what I can do?
7. What kind of exercise should I do, and how often?
8. Can you suggest a mental health professional I can see if I start to feel overwhelmed, depressed, or distressed?

9. Will I need special tests, such as imaging scans or blood tests, and how often?

10. What should I watch for while on treatment?

AFTER TREATMENT

1. Do I need a special diet after treatment?

2. Are there any limits on what I can do?

3. What kind of exercise should I do now?

4. What type of follow-up will I need after treatment?

5. How often will I need to have follow-up exams and imaging tests?

6. What blood tests will I need?

7. How will I know if the cancer has come back?

8. What are the next steps in my treatment plan?

OTHER QUESTIONS I NEED ANSWERED

Along with the sample questions you've been given, be sure to ask any others you might have. For instance, you might need to know more about how long it will take to recover from surgery so you can plan your work schedule. Or, you may need to ask about insurance coverage or how you can get help paying for treatment. Write your own questions here.

TIPS FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH YOUR DOCTOR

- Write down your questions and concerns before your appointment
- Have a notebook or use a recording app on your mobile device to capture key information
- Bring a friend or family member with you
- Don't be afraid to tell your doctor if you don't understand something
- Let your doctor know if you are interested in seeking a second opinion

GLOSSARY OF HELPFUL TERMS

For a detailed, searchable glossary from the American Cancer Society, visit www.cancer.org/cancer/cancerglossary/index.

Blinded: Study in which the patient does not know which treatment they are receiving.

Clinical trial: Study in which people volunteer to test if drugs, procedures, or devices work and are safe in humans.

Control group: The patients in a study who receive the standard of care.

Double-blinded: Study in which neither the patient nor the doctor knows which treatment the patient is receiving.

Intervention group: The patients in a study who receive the treatment that is being studied; also called the test group or study group.

Phase 1: Small study (20 to 80 people) to find the highest dose of an investigational treatment that can be given safely without serious side effects.

Phase 2: Larger study (25 to 100 people) to see if an investigational treatment works and is safe in a larger group of patients.

Phase 3: Study in at least several hundred people to compare the safety and effectiveness of an investigational treatment against the current standard of care.

Phase 4: Study in thousands of people to assess the safety of an approved treatment over a longer period of time.

Randomized: Each person who takes part in the study gets assigned randomly to either the investigational treatment group or the control group. This helps reduce the chance that one group will be different from the other so the results are not skewed in favor of one group.

Stage: The extent of a cancer, which is usually assigned a number from I to IV. Staging is the process of finding out whether the cancer has spread, and if so, how far.

Standard of care: The most commonly used and most widely accepted form of treatment, which has usually been tested and proven; also called conventional, standard, or mainstream treatment.

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