

Questions to Ask About Your Cancer

If you have been told you have cancer, you may have a lot of questions but are not sure how to ask them. Your health care team is the best source of information about your situation. Here are some sample questions you could ask that might help you better understand your cancer and your options. You will likely have other questions as well.

When you're told you have cancer

- What kind of cancer do you think I have?
- Why do you think I have cancer?
- Where do you think the cancer started in my body? Has it spread from where it started?
- Do you know the stage of the cancer? Would you explain what the stage means for me?
- What are my chances of surviving the cancer?
- Do I need to have other tests?
- Who will do these tests? When and where will they be done? Who can explain them to me?
- How and when will I get the results? Who will explain them to me?
- Can biomarker or molecular testing be done for my type of cancer?
- Should I think about genetic testing?
- What's the goal of this treatment? Do you think it could cure the cancer?
- Where can I learn more about this treatment and any other choices I might have?
- Will I need surgery?
- If I need surgery, will I need other treatment(s) before or after surgery?
- Is there a clinical trial that might be right for me?
- Will I need to see other doctors?
- What will my treatment be like?
- How long will my treatment last?
- Where will I go for treatment?
- Who will do my treatments?
- Will these treatments have risks?
- Will I be able to have children after treatment?
- How will treatment affect my work, family, and daily activities?

Deciding on a treatment plan

- How much experience do you have treating this type of cancer?
- Should I get a second opinion? How would I do that?
- What are my treatment choices?
- What treatment do you suggest? Why?
- How soon do I need to start treatment?
- What will happen if I decide not to get treatment right now?
- What would we do if the treatment doesn't work or if the cancer comes back?
- What are the chances the cancer will come back after this treatment?
- Who can help me figure out what my insurance covers and what I will have to pay myself?
- What can I do if I don't have health insurance?
- What can I do if I can't afford the treatments I need?

Before and during treatment

- What can I do to get ready for treatment?
- Can I drive myself to treatment or should I get a ride? What if I can't find a ride to treatment?
- Is there anything I can do to help the treatment work better?
- What side effects could I have from these treatments?
- What's the best time to call if I have a question or problem? How quickly can I expect to be called back?
- What should I do if I have a serious problem when your office is closed?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- Will I need special tests, such as imaging scans or blood tests, and if so, how often?
- Will I need to take any special precautions while I'm getting treated?
- Do I need to change what I eat during treatment?
- Will I be able to exercise during treatment? What kind of exercise should I do, and how often?
- What about vitamins or diets that friends tell me about? How will I know if they are safe?
- What if I need help at home?
- Can you suggest a mental health professional I can see if I start to feel anxious, depressed, or distressed?

If you are having symptoms or side effects from your cancer or treatment

- What can I do to help control my symptoms and side effects?
- Who can help me control my symptoms and side effects?
- What signs, symptoms, or side effects should I let my health care team know about? Which ones should I tell you about right away?

- When should I call you? When should I call my family doctor or other doctor?
- Is there any special care you'd recommend for me?

If your treatment is not working or you need to change to a different treatment

- Why do you think this treatment isn't working for me?
- What are my options now? Are there other treatments that might work for me?
- What are the chances a new treatment will work?
- If you don't have a good treatment option for me, is there somewhere I could get a second opinion?
- What if I decide I don't want to get more treatment?

If you have finished treatment or are not getting treated

- Now that treatment is done, is there any other medicine or therapy I need? How do you know?
- What type of follow-up will I need?
- How often will I need to have check-ups, blood work, and imaging tests after my treatment ends?
- How long will it take for my side effects to go away?
- What problems should I watch for now that my treatment is finished?
- Who can I talk to if I have trouble coping with the changes in my life?
- Are there any limits on what I can do?
- How will I know if the cancer has come back? What should I watch for?
- What will we do if the cancer comes back?
- What can I do to try to keep my cancer from coming back?
- When should I call you? When should I call my family doctor or other doctor?

For cancer information, day-to-day help, and support, call the American Cancer Society at **1-800-227-2345** or visit us online at **cancer.org**. We're here when you need us.

