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Questions to Ask About Chemotherapy

It's important to know that medicines and drugs used to treat cancer can be quite different and everyone's situation is different. **If you're considering traditional or standard chemotherapy as a treatment option, the questions below may be helpful to ask your cancer care team so you can get as much information as possible.** For questions to ask about other types of drugs to treat cancer, see [Targeted Therapy](#)¹ or [Immunotherapy](#)².

Before choosing chemo as a treatment option, you should learn as much as you can about your treatment, and get an idea of the expected outcome. You should understand the expected benefits, side effects, and risks.

You will also give your written permission to get chemo. (This is called [informed consent](#)³.) Consider asking your doctor or nurse these questions before signing the consent form. It may help to write down questions to take with you to your next visit.

- Which chemo drugs will I be given?
- How will the drugs be given to me?
- How often will I need to get chemo?
- How long will my treatments last?
- Where will I get chemo?
- What's the goal of chemo for my cancer?
- What are the chances that the chemo will work?
- Are there other ways to reach the same treatment goals?
- How will I know if the chemo is working?
- What will we do if this chemo doesn't work?
- What are the risks and [side effects of the chemo](#)⁴ I will be taking? How do these side effects compare with side effects of other treatments?
- Will I be able to drive myself to and from treatment appointments or should

someone drive me?

- What can I do to get ready for treatment and decrease the chance of side effects?
- Can I take my other medicines, vitamins, and/or supplements while getting chemo?
- Will I need to change my [diet](#)⁵ in any way? Can I drink alcohol?
- Will I need to change my activities? [Exercise](#)⁶? Sexual activities?
- Will chemo affect my [ability to have children](#)⁷?
- Will I be able to [work while getting chemo](#)⁸?
- Will I also need surgery, radiation, or both? If so, when and why? What results can I expect?
- If I have chemo after surgery or radiation, will it kill any remaining cancer cells? Could chemo be used alone?
- How much time do I have to decide about treatment? How long can I wait before starting treatment? How long is too long?
- Can I take part in a [clinical trial](#)⁹?
- How much will chemo cost? Will my health insurance cover it?
- Are you and your team experienced in caring for patients who are getting this treatment?
- If the insurance company asks for a second opinion, or if I would like to get one, can you suggest someone for me to see?

Here are some tips to help you remember your doctor's answers:

- Take notes during your visits. Don't feel shy about asking your doctor to slow down if you need more time to write. Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- If you can, record your visit so you won't miss anything. But first ask your doctor if it's OK to record your talks.
- Consider taking a friend or relative with you to help you understand what your doctor says during the visit, to take notes, and to help refresh your memory afterward.

See [Understanding Your Diagnosis](#)¹⁰ for more ideas about the things you and your family may want to know.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/treatment-types/targeted-therapy.html
2. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/treatment-

- [types/immunotherapy.html](#)
3. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/planning-managing/informed-consent.html
 4. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/treatment-types/chemotherapy/chemotherapy-side-effects.html
 5. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/coping/nutrition.html
 6. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/be-healthy-after-treatment/physical-activity-and-the-cancer-patient.html
 7. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/physical-side-effects/fertility-and-sexual-side-effects.html
 8. www.cancer.org/treatment/survivorship-during-and-after-treatment/coping/working-during-cancer-treatment.html
 9. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/clinical-trials.html
 10. www.cancer.org/treatment/understanding-your-diagnosis.html

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Our team is made up of doctors and oncology certified nurses with deep knowledge of cancer care as well as journalists, editors, and translators with extensive experience in medical writing.

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