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When Treatment Should Start

Waiting for your cancer treatment to start can bring up strong emotions. If you're experiencing anxiety, sadness, or other kinds of stressful emotions, it may help you to talk with others about it. You might also have questions about the timing of your treatment, such as when treatment will start, if it can or will be delayed, or why it might be OK to wait to start. You might wonder "how long is too long to wait?"

Does cancer treatment always need to be started right away?

Sometimes, it's important to start treatment as quickly as possible, but that's not always the case. [Planning cancer treatment](#)¹ can be complex and might take some time, depending on the type and stage of your cancer. There are many factors that will affect when treatment can or should be started. Here are some reasons why there are differences in when treatments start.

Treatment might need to be started quickly if:

- You have a type of cancer that needs to be treated right away, like some leukemias, lymphomas, and certain other cancers that tend to be aggressive (grow and spread very fast).
- You have a tumor that's pressing on an organ or other vital part of the body, and treatment is needed to relieve the pressure.

Some patients can wait a few weeks or a few months to start treatment because their type of cancer does not tend to grow as fast as others. When treatment doesn't need to start immediately, it might be delayed if:

- You are waiting to get lab results back that will help decide what treatment option is best.

- You have already had surgery to remove a tumor, and you need time to recover before starting more treatment.
- You need to make adjustments at home, work, or for child care before starting treatment.
- There are other personal factors and health problems that must be worked around.
- You want more time to get a second opinion.

It's important to know each person's case is different. There are many factors that can affect when treatment should, or does, start. Questions about when your treatment should start need to be answered by your cancer care team, because they know your situation best.

Hyperlinks

1. www.cancer.org/treatment/treatments-and-side-effects/planning-managing/planning-scheduling-treatment.html

References

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