



After a Bone Cancer Diagnosis



Bone cancer is a type of cancer that starts in a bone. If you have been told you have bone cancer, you've probably already had blood tests, x-rays and scans, and a biopsy (a test that takes some tissue to check for cancer). Other tests might have been done on the cancer cells to check for certain proteins and gene changes called biomarkers. You might also have other procedures to find out if the cancer has spread. These tests help your doctor know what type of bone cancer you have, what stage it is, and what treatment might help.

Treatment for bone cancer

Your treatment will depend on the type and stage of the bone cancer. Your treatment options will also depend on the results of tests on the cancer cells, your health, and your personal preferences.

Surgery is an important part of treatment for most types of bone cancer. The type of surgery you have will depend mainly on the location and size of your tumor.

All operations to remove bone cancer are complex. But tumors in the arms or legs are generally not as hard to remove as those in the jawbone, at the base of the skull, in the spine, or in the pelvic (hip) bone.

Other treatments for bone cancer can include radiation, chemotherapy (chemo), targeted therapy, and immunotherapy. In many cases, more than one type of treatment is needed. Your doctor will help you decide which treatments are best for you.

Be sure to ask:

- What type of bone cancer do I have?
- Where is the cancer in my bone?
- What stage is the bone cancer, and what does that mean?
- Will I need more tests?
- What treatment do you think is best for me?
- What is the goal of treatment?
- Will treatment include surgery?
- Will I need other types of treatment, too?

What to expect before and during treatment

Your cancer care team will explain your treatment plan to you. This team might include different doctors, nurses, and other health care workers, depending on the type of treatment you need.

If you need surgery, you will work with a surgeon. They will tell you what to expect before, during, and after surgery. They will also let you know if you will need any special therapy to recover from surgery.

If you need other types of treatment, your cancer care team will explain how it is given, help you get ready for it, keep track of how you're doing, and help you with any side effects. You might also get blood tests, scans, or other tests at certain times to see how well your treatment is working.

Not everyone going through treatment for bone cancer will have the same side effects. For example, the side effects of surgery are different from the side effects of radiation, chemo, immunotherapy, or targeted therapy. And people getting the same treatment might have different side effects.

Be sure to ask:

- What side effects might I have, and what can I do about them?
- How will we know if the treatment is working?
- How often will I get treatment? How long will it last?
- Where will I go to get treatment? Can I drive myself?
- Will treatment change the way my body looks and works?
- How will treatment affect my daily life?
- Are there any clinical trials that might be right for me?

What to expect after treatment

After treatment, ask your cancer doctor for a treatment summary and follow-up plan. This is called a survivorship care plan.

Your cancer doctor will work with your family or primary care doctor to help manage side effects from treatment and check your general health. You will have regular tests to check if your cancer has come back or if a new cancer has started in a different part of your body.

You might be faced with changes to your body after treatment. Ask your doctor what to expect and what can be done to deal with these changes. And let them know if you have any problems.

People who have had bone cancer are at risk of having it come back or getting certain other types of cancer. Even if you feel fine after finishing treatment, it's important to ask your cancer care team about a regular schedule for follow-up tests to check if your bone cancer has come back.

For some people, the cancer might not go away completely. They might continue to get treatment, and tests will still be needed to see how well it's working.

Be sure to ask:

- Where do I get a copy of my treatment summary and follow-up plan?
- How often do I need to see my cancer care team?
- When and how should I contact them?
- Will I need tests to see if my cancer has come back, or to check for problems from my treatment?
- Do I need any screening tests, like a mammogram or colonoscopy, to find other cancers early?
- Are there late or long-term side effects from treatment that I should watch for?
- Where can I find my medical records after treatment?

Staying healthy

Be sure to tell your doctor or cancer care team if any treatment side effects don't go away or if you have any new symptoms.

There are things you can do to keep yourself healthy during and after treatment. Getting to and staying at a healthy weight, not smoking, eating well, being active, and avoiding alcohol can help you stay healthy. These things may also help lower your risk of getting a new cancer.

Dealing with your feelings

Having bone cancer might make you feel scared, sad, or nervous. It's normal to have these feelings, and there are ways to help you cope with them.

- Don't try to deal with your feelings by yourself. Talk about them, no matter what they are.
- It's OK to feel sad or down once in a while, but let your cancer care team know if you have these feelings for more than a few days.
- If your doctor says it's OK, continue doing things you enjoy like spending time outdoors, going to a movie or sporting event, or going out to dinner.
- Get help with tasks like cooking and cleaning.

You might want to reach out to friends, family, or religious leaders or groups. Counseling can also help. Some people find it helpful to talk with others who've been through the same things. A support group can offer that. Tell your cancer care team how you're feeling. They can help you find the right support.



For more information and support, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/bonecancer or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.