



Talking With Your Doctor and Cancer Care Team

Each person with cancer will have a team of trained people to help them deal with their disease and treatment. Being able to have good conversations with your cancer care team is a key part of getting the care that's best for you.

Your cancer care team may include doctors and other health care professionals, such as nurse practitioners (NPs), physician assistants (PAs), pharmacists, social workers, clinic or chemotherapy nurses, technicians, medical assistants, dietitians, and patient navigators. They will each help in different ways, and if you ask a question they can't answer, they'll know who can help.

How much do I want to know?

Some people want to know a lot about their cancer. Knowing all the details may help them feel more in control.

Other people might not want to be told too much at one time and may feel overwhelmed by details. Some people might prefer to leave most decisions to their doctor. Tell your cancer care team what works best for you.

Ask questions.

You and your cancer care team will work together to choose the care and treatment that's best for you. Learning about your cancer and how it can be treated can help you make these decisions with your doctor.

Don't be afraid to ask questions. Some doctors wait for you to ask questions, but you may not know what to ask. It may help to write down questions as you think of them and take a list with you when you go to appointments.

Here are some questions many people have about cancer:

- What kind of cancer do I have?
- How big is my cancer? Where is it? Has it spread to other parts of my body?
- Will I need a biopsy or other tests?
- What treatment do you suggest? Are there other treatments that might help me?
- Where would I get my treatments?
- What medicines will I get? What are they for?
- What are the risks and side effects of each treatment?
- Will I be able to work or go to school during treatment?
- Are there any side effects or unusual signs that I need to tell you about right away?
- What can be done about the side effects?
- 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?
- Should I get a second opinion? From whom?

Your cancer care team should want to know your questions and concerns. If you don't get the answers you need, let them know.

Tips for remembering what the cancer care team tells you

It can be hard to remember what you are told at each visit. It helps if you can bring the same person with you each time. They can remind you of questions you want to ask and help you remember what was said.

Be sure you or the person with you writes down what you learn at your appointments. If you would like, ask your doctor or other cancer care team member if it's OK to record your visit.

If you need more details, say so. Sometimes, cancer care team members use words that are hard to understand. If you don't understand something, ask them to explain it. It may help to ask for pictures, printed materials, website or video links, or other things you can look at when you get home.

When you get instructions, write them down. Make sure you understand them before your visit is done. Then follow them exactly. It's OK to call the cancer care team if you have more questions later.

Find the right fit.

Your relationship with your doctor is important, and each person has their own way of sharing information.



To learn more, visit the American Cancer Society website at cancer.org/phm or call us at **1-800-227-2345**. We're here when you need us.

That's why the best doctor for one person may not be a good fit for someone else. Some people want a doctor who shares facts in a businesslike way. They don't expect the doctor to be their friend. Other people want a doctor they can feel close to. Try to figure out what you need, and let your doctor know.

If communication problems come up, talk to your doctor or other members of the cancer care team about them. Be honest about your concerns and wishes. If you're not happy with your relationship, it's OK to change doctors. Tell your doctor about your decision and the reasons for it. Ask for their help in moving your care to the new doctor.

It's YOUR cancer care team.

Your cancer care team will count on you to be a part of the team. This means going to office visits, taking medicines as prescribed, telling your team about any problems or concerns you're having, answering their questions, and asking your own questions.

By sharing your wants and needs, you and your cancer care team can work together to make the best decisions for you.

