

What cancer patients should ask before, during and after treatment

Doctors agree: Cancer patients should ask questions at each step of the treatment process. They should ask doctors about their experience, treatment possibilities, participation in clinical trials, and the costs of various treatments options.

Here are some recommended questions. (Source: Doctors and www.cancer.gov)

For yourself:

- Am I comfortable with this doctor?
- Should I have a second opinion?
- Where do I want to receive my treatment?
- Are there aspects of my lifestyle to consider before making treatment options, such as insurance, income, children, location, etc.?

For your oncologist and surgeon:

- How many cases like mine have you treated or operated?
- What are my treatment options?
- What treatments do you recommend? Why?
- How safe is the procedure? What are the side effects of treatment? Will I be able to work?
- What are the advantages of a specialized cancer center, and should I go there?

For when treatment is over:

- What treatments and drugs have I been given?
- Which doctor should I see for my follow-up cancer care?
- What are the chances that my cancer will come back or that I will get another type of cancer?
- Should I have follow-up tests and how often?
- What symptoms should I watch for, and what do I do about them?
- What are the common long-term and late effects of the treatment I received?
- What should I do to maintain my health and well-being?
- Will I have trouble getting health insurance or keeping a job because of my cancer?
- Are there support groups I can turn to?