

# A GUIDE TO YOUR CANCER CARE TEAM

Dealing with cancer can be challenging. It's important to understand the different roles in your care team and who to ask when you have specific questions.

Your cancer care team is a group of health care providers whose goal is to provide the best cancer care possible—whether it's in person, by video, telephone, or through a patient portal. In addition to your health care providers, you can ask friends and family to be part of your team as care champions who support you.

Each member of your team has a role in a different part of your care. They work together to answer your questions and make sure you get the care you need.

**You're always at the center of your care team.**

## **Take an active role in your care.**

**Understanding your cancer treatment plan may help give you a feeling of control.**

**If something is not clear, ask a member of your care team to explain.**



## WHO IS ON YOUR CANCER CARE TEAM?

The health care providers listed below are the ones who will make up your care team. They will help with treatment and ongoing care to support you with your goals and needs. Your health care providers can also help you navigate the challenges that may be ahead.

Check the box for each member of your team below.

**Oncologists** specialize in treating cancer. They work with you to decide on the best treatment for you. Different types of oncologists can help you at different times in your journey, such as **medical, surgical, and radiation oncologists**.

**Surgeons** are trained to do surgery on a range of conditions and parts of the body. They will also help diagnose cancer.

**Specialty surgeons** are experts in a certain type of surgery and may join your team based on your needs.

**Oncology nurses** specialize in helping to treat and care for people who have cancer. They talk to your doctors about your specific needs, check your physical condition, and help you deal with side effects.

**Surgical nurses** provide care to you before, during, and after surgery.

**Nurse practitioners and physician assistants** can examine you, order tests, and may prescribe medications. They also provide education and counseling.

**Radiologists and pathologists** supervise and perform tests (such as imaging and lab tests), review the results, and interpret the findings. They support other members of your cancer care team to decide the type and stage of your cancer.



## WHO ELSE CAN OFFER YOU SUPPORT?

Sometimes, you may need to add other members to your team for specific support. Review this list and think about who else you can add to your cancer care team.

Check the box for each member of your team below.

**Patient navigators/nurse navigators** can help educate you throughout the entire treatment journey, including beyond treatment. They can connect you to support services, schedule your doctor visits and tests, connect you with resources that may help improve your self-image, or meet other needs. They also talk with you and your family about planning ahead or next steps.

**Financial navigators** can help you and your family understand out-of-pocket costs and health insurance coverage as well as manage stress associated with costs of treatment.


**Social workers** provide support for your financial, emotional, and day-to-day needs. They can also refer you to support groups or provide helpful resources for childcare or transportation to your appointments.

**Primary care physicians (PCP)** can provide general health care, including the prevention and treatment of various conditions. They can also refer you to specialists.

**Plastic surgeons** are surgeons with special training to rebuild or replace parts of the body that may have changed from cancer.

**Occupational therapists (OT)** create a plan to help you with your daily activities. They may support you with any functional limitations caused by cancer.

**Physical therapists (PT)** can help you with your movement and physical abilities.



**Fertility counselors** explain how a cancer treatment can change your ability to have children. They can review options to help protect your fertility.

**Genetic counselors** can help you and your health care team understand how your genes and family history may play a part in your cancer.

**Psychiatrists** are doctors who prescribe medication and provide counseling for mental, emotional, and behavioral issues that may come up during treatment.

**Psychologists** can help you and your family deal with the mental and emotional challenges of cancer. They provide testing and counseling as needed.

**Palliative care specialists** focus on treating people with a serious illness. They provide relief from the symptoms associated with cancer and cancer treatment.

**Dietitians** can create a specific meal plan based on your cancer type, treatment, and food needs.

**Other specialists that may be part of your team:** dentist, hematologist, ophthalmologist, gynecologist, specialty pharmacist

## **Take care of yourself.**

**When you have cancer, you may have many emotions. It may be hard to ask for help, but that's what your team is there for.**

**Your care team is there to help you learn how to better manage these feelings and take care of yourself. Getting the help you need is a way to care for yourself and your loved ones.**

# CREATE YOUR PATH TO MORE SUPPORT

Now that you know a little more about who can be a part of your cancer care team, think about what you need help with and who you can ask for help. Enter your thoughts in the spaces below to create your **PATH: Plan. Ask. Talk. Help.**

## **P**lan

What do I need help with the most?

*Example: I'd like help to understand how to take care of my financial and employment needs.*



## **A**sk

Who else should I add to my team?

*Example: I think I might benefit from speaking with a social worker.*



## **T**alk

What do I want my team to know so they can support me?

*Example: I want my team to help me understand how I can manage my cancer along with other health concerns.*



## **H**elp

What else could my team help with?

*Example: I'd like to learn more to prepare for future appointments.*



# Get ready TO TAKE THE FIRST STEP

Now that you've used the PATH activity, you may be ready to start a conversation with your cancer care team. In the spaces below, enter a few questions you'd like to ask during your next appointment—whether it's in person or via video or telephone.

During my next appointment, I want to ask:



By the end of my next appointment, I hope to have a better understanding of:



## Decide what works for you.

Whether you print this guide out or save it on your phone or computer, keeping it nearby may help you know who you can turn to for help with your care.