

## WHAT TO DISCUSS

# Throughout Your Cancer Treatment



Whether you're just starting, continuing, or finishing treatment, a lot of information may be provided to you. Learning about what to expect may help you understand and take part in treatment decisions. Your health care team is a good resource for answering questions you may have and may be able to direct you to additional resources and support.

## USE THIS GUIDE TO HELP MAKE A PLAN

- **First, identify where you are in your treatment from the 4 options below.**
- **Next, go to the section, read the questions, and select what you'd like to discuss with your health care team at your next appointment. Explore the other sections to help guide future conversations with your health care team.**

### Where are you in your current treatment?



*Pages 2–5*



*Pages 6–8*



*Pages 9–11*



*Pages 12–13*

**Having a trusted companion with you at health care appointments may help you remember what you'd like to discuss and the information you are given during the visit.**

### Keep this information nearby.

Whether you print this guide out or save it on your phone or computer, keeping it nearby may help you remember what you want to discuss at your appointments.



## PRACTICAL NEEDS

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You may have questions about how your new treatment could impact your everyday life. Ask your health care team questions you may have so you can better understand the information you are given and take part in your treatment decisions.

### **Mark the questions you'd like to ask.**

How often will I have appointments, and how long will they take?

Should I plan my treatment appointments on days when I don't have other plans?

Will I be able to drive myself home after treatments?

For after-hours questions, who should I contact, and how can I contact them?

Is there someone who can help guide me through all my appointments and tests?

Are there resources I can use if I need help paying my medical bills or getting access to medicine?

Will I be able to continue to do the day-to-day things I have always done?

### **Add additional questions you may have.**





## PRACTICAL NEEDS *(continued)*

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What kind of help will I need on a day-to-day basis?

Can you recommend support organizations in my community?

How do I talk to my loved ones about my treatment?

How long should I expect to be on treatment?

Are there organizations that could help if I have trouble getting a ride to appointments?

Are there organizations that could help me arrange child care during my appointments?

**Add additional questions you may have.**



**For a list of organizations offering education, resources, and support communities for cancer patients, see page 14.**



## PHYSICAL NEEDS

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Everyone's body responds differently to treatment, and you know your body better than anyone else. Speak up about how you are feeling at your health care appointments.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

What are some symptoms I may experience while on treatment?

Why are you recommending this treatment, and what does it do?

Can we discuss my test and scan results so I can better understand them?

If I had biomarker testing done, can we discuss the results so that I can understand them better?

Can I do the same physical activities I've been doing?

How can I best prepare for treatment?

What should I do if I experience symptoms or side effects between visits?

Are there resources that can help me manage symptoms such as fatigue or feeling tired?

Am I taking this treatment in combination with other treatments?

Do I need to change my diet or follow a certain diet while on treatment?

### Add additional questions you may have.





## EMOTIONAL NEEDS

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Having cancer can be an overwhelming life event. Sharing your concerns may ease your mind and may lead to a stronger partnership with your health care team.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

How can I adjust to the changes to my body and appearance?

How can I cope with my fear of being judged for having cancer?

How can I feel more confident that I'm making the right decisions about my treatment?

How can I help friends and family deal with their emotions?

### Add additional questions you may have.





## PHYSICAL NEEDS

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It's important to talk to your health care team about any new or unusual symptoms. Creating a routine to track your symptoms early and often is a great way to start. This can help your health care team understand how your treatment is going. Getting medical treatment right away may help keep problems from becoming more serious.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

Can you explain again what this treatment does?

How will I know if the treatment is working?

How can I manage my cancer treatment along with my other medical issues and/or medications?

What can I do to lessen symptoms such as feeling tired, pain, or other symptoms?

What can I do when I have trouble sleeping?

What physical changes can I expect?

What foods could impact how I feel during treatment?

What changes could I make in my daily life to feel better?

### Add additional questions you may have.



**Keep track of your symptoms in a journal, so you can easily share them with your health care team.**



## EMOTIONAL NEEDS

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No topic is off-limits when it comes to your health. Talk to your health care team about any concerns you may have.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

I'm having trouble sharing my concerns. Can you help me get started?

What may help when I'm feeling worried?

How can I manage the emotional ups and downs of living with cancer?

Who can I talk to when I'm feeling really overwhelmed?

What can I do to manage the worry I feel while waiting for test and scan results?

### Add additional questions you may have.





## PRACTICAL NEEDS

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Write out any challenges you're facing. Your health care team may be able to suggest resources and support options.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

Are there resources to help if I can no longer work?

How can I learn to accept the help I need when I have always been the one others turn to?

What kind of plans should I have in place to take care of my loved ones?

What resources are available that may help my family with my diagnosis and treatment?

### Add additional questions you may have.





## EMOTIONAL NEEDS

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Having cancer can be overwhelming. Talk to your health care team about how you're feeling. They may be able to help you find the resources you may need to cope with challenges.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

What are some ways I could better manage the worry and stress I feel?

How can I cope with changes in my relationships?

What can I do if I have concerns about being intimate with my partner?

How do I talk with my family about what I'm going through?

What patient support groups are available where I can talk about my feelings?

Do you know of ways to keep calm before appointments and tests?

Who can I talk to if I feel like others are judging me?

### Add additional questions you may have.



**Give yourself a break. Focus on just one breath to help yourself relax. Breathe in, then out. Pay attention to how it feels.**



## PRACTICAL NEEDS

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Don't worry about asking too many questions or saying something that feels awkward. This is your body and your health. You have every right to ask questions and get answers.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

Is there support that may help me manage my health?

Is there support that may help me manage all of my appointments?

If I can't work anymore, could I get help paying bills?

What resources are available that may help with my daily needs?

Where can I find national or local support organizations?

How do I talk to my employer about what I'm going through?

### Add additional questions you may have.





## PHYSICAL NEEDS

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It's important to be open with your health care team about your symptoms. Becoming better informed will allow you and your health care team to work together to decide what's right for you.

### Mark the questions you'd like to ask.

How might my symptoms change over time?

Now that I have been on treatment for a while, is there anything different I could expect?

I'm having trouble concentrating and remembering things. Will this go away, and are there strategies to help me think more clearly?

Are there things I can do to make my overall health better during treatment?

### Add additional questions you may have.



## WHAT TO DISCUSS

# I'm Finished



Completing treatment can bring with it feelings of happiness as well as worry. Asking questions about what to expect after treatment ends may help.

Mark the questions you'd like to ask.



### PRACTICAL NEEDS

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Why are you recommending that I stop this treatment?

Which health care provider(s) should I see after treatment? And how often?

Will I be able to return to work? If not, could I get help paying my bills?



### PHYSICAL NEEDS

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Who should I tell if I have symptoms that worry me?

What tests or scans, if any, will I need when cancer treatment ends?

Does it mean that cancer is back if I experience symptoms?

How can I stay healthy after my treatment ends? Are there things I should or should not do?



### EMOTIONAL NEEDS

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Will I ever feel like myself again?

How do I learn to accept the changes to my body?

Who can I talk to about managing my fear that cancer may come back?



**Add additional questions you may have.**



## WHERE TO FIND

# Cancer Resources

There are organizations that can provide information or support resources as your needs change. Listed below are a few national groups. Your community may have local resources with support for daily needs.

- **American Cancer Society®** is a national nonprofit health organization dedicated to offering free information, programs, services, and community support referrals to people living with cancer and their caregivers through every step of the treatment journey.
- **Cancer Support Community** is dedicated to providing support, education, and hope to people affected by cancer. Support videos and services are available through a network of community-based centers, hospitals, and oncology practices as well as online.
- **CancerCare®** is a national organization offering free support services such as counseling and support groups from oncology social workers and experts. Online support resources and educational workshops for caregivers and families are also accessible by phone. Limited financial assistance is available.