

Talking To Your Doctor About Treatment



What to **TELL** your doctor before starting any medication

Before starting any treatment or medication, there are some key things to discuss with your doctor. It is recommended to **notify** all of your healthcare providers (primary care doctor, specialists, physical therapists, dentists, emergency room doctors, etc.) about your cancer treatment so they know how to adjust your care accordingly. You should also **keep your cancer doctor informed** about any other suggested changes to your health or care in case they could affect your cancer treatment.

ALLERGIES



- Even if you haven't been formally diagnosed, let your doctor know if your body doesn't react well to certain medications, foods, products (like latex gloves), or even things like certain colors of dyes.
- Medications are complex chemicals that can interact with your body in weird ways, so knowing about allergies ahead of time could help minimize abnormal reactions.

FAMILY HISTORY OF MEDICAL PROBLEMS



- Any family history or severe or recurring medical problems (not just cancer) should be brought up to your doctor.
- Even if you don't have any current symptoms, knowing about them could help prepare the doctor with what to look out for and manage treatment accordingly.

CURRENT OR PAST MEDICAL PROBLEMS



- Even if you aren't currently under the care of another doctor, report current or past medical problems.
- Some conditions will affect how well you may respond to certain drugs or surgeries or what type of side effects, you may experience.
- Make sure to list any medical problems you have currently or serious ones you have had in the past. Start with your head and work your way down to your toes thinking of any area of your body that has a problem, even if you think it may be minor, just in case.
- If you see other doctors, make sure to let them know you have started cancer treatments and connect them to your cancer specialist for more information.

ADDITIONAL MEDICATION



- Know the medicines you take (including prescriptions, over-the-counter, vitamins, and supplements, whether taken every day or even just sometimes). Keep a list of them to show your doctor and pharmacist when you get a new medicine or start/change treatment.
- Your cancer treatment may affect the way other medicines work and other medicines may affect how well your cancer treatment works or what side effects the combination may cause. Your doctor can help you determine if those medications need to change or be altered in any way to avoid this and get you the best care for all your conditions.
- Do not start or stop any new medications or vaccines without talking to your doctors.



PREGNANCY/BREAST FEEDING



- Sometimes treatments can have positive effects on cancer but could cause fertility problems, risks to an unborn baby, or be transferred to a baby through breast milk.
- It may be recommended that you do not breastfeed and that you take birth control during treatment (and for a period after stopping treatment) to minimize these risks.
- If you become pregnant during treatment or think you might be, make sure to tell your doctor right away.

MENTAL HEALTH



- Even without a formal diagnosis, everyone struggles with mental health concerns at some point, even temporarily. Cancer treatment can be hard and make these struggles harder or even bring them on for the first time.
- Don't be afraid to mention this to your doctor as soon as you notice a change in mood or reactions. Your doctor can help by adjusting your medication, prescribing a new medication, or finding you support. You don't have to struggle alone.

NON-MEDICAL ITEMS



- Life still goes on during cancer treatment. Although things will shift as you work through treatment, some things are either unavoidable or are important to you to continue.
- Things like not having reliable transportation to get to the infusion clinic, problems swallowing pills, being an exercise instructor, driving cross-country for work, and travel plans – can all affect your ability to keep treatment appointments or make side effects more of a concern.
- Keep an open dialogue with your doctor about things like this so they can work with you to give you a good life-treatment balance. Getting better is #1, but life still goes on and you ARE more than your cancer.

RECENT OR PLANNED SURGERY



- Depending on the reason and type of surgery (this includes dental surgery), you may need to temporarily stop your cancer treatment in order to avoid additional problems during those procedures.
- Your cancer doctor can work with you to determine the best plan to address your needs across all your medical conditions.

WHEN IN DOUBT, TALK IT OUT!

You deserve to feel the best you can during treatment, and your doctor needs to know about things that could affect how well you feel, how well a medication works, or other conditions that are affecting your health, and you deserve to feel the best you can during treatment for any medical conditions. Talking through concerns (past, present, or even future) is the key to making sure you can make the best decisions together.

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Questions to **ASK** your doctor before starting treatment

Taking an active role in your kidney cancer care is important. Studies have shown that people with cancer who are **well informed** about their cancer and treatment options usually have better outcomes and fewer side effects than those who just follow their doctors' orders. You don't need to become an expert in cancer care but **understanding more about your options** can help you and your doctor make the right choice together.

TO MAKE THE MOST OUT OF EACH OF YOUR DOCTOR'S APPOINTMENTS:



Bring a notebook with your list of questions and a pen to your appointment. You can also bring a recording device or use a recording app on your phone. That way, you can go back and listen to what the doctor said after your appointment to make sure you have all the details. Be sure to let your doctor know you are recording the conversation.



Remember, it is okay to ask the doctor to repeat what they said so you can understand better or to contact them later with a follow-up question.



Make plans to bring someone with you or call or use a video chat to have them virtually sit in.



Write down all the questions you and your family have ahead of time.



QUESTIONS BEFORE STARTING TREATMENT

- What is the treatment plan you recommend? Why?
- What are the risks of this treatment plan? What are the benefits?
- What is the goal of my treatment plan? To eliminate my cancer or make me feel better, or both?
- How long do I have to decide on my treatment plan?
- How does my age, cancer type, cancer stage, or other health issues limit or affect my options?
- How can I figure out what the treatment will cost and if my insurance will cover it?
- How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I still be able to go to work, exercise, and do my normal daily activities?
- I'm worried about paying for my treatment. Who can help me?
- How can I prepare for treatment? Are there lifestyle changes I should make to be healthy before, during, and after my treatment? Should I stop taking my medications?
- How often will I have treatments? How long will they last?
- What are the chances that my kidney cancer will return after treatment?
- What are the side effects I need to watch out for, and what do I do if I experience side effects?
- Are clinical trials a good treatment option for me to consider?

QUESTIONS ABOUT CLINICAL TRIALS

- What clinical trials are available for my type and stage of kidney cancer?
- What does the treatment do? How is it different from what is currently available?
- Will I know what treatment I receive? Will I receive a placebo?
- Will it cost me anything to be a participant?

QUESTIONS DURING TREATMENT

- How am I responding to my current treatment?
- Would another kind of treatment work better?
- If I don't have any symptoms, does this mean my cancer is under control?
- If I have an important family event coming up, can we arrange treatment around that?