

Getting Tested for Cancer: **An early diagnosis can save your life.**

Here is a list of questions you might want to ask your doctor.

1. What diagnostic tests or procedures are you recommending?
2. What extra information do you get from each of these tests?
3. Will the tests show whether I have a tumor and whether it is benign or malignant?
4. Will they show what stage my cancer is at?
5. What does each of these tests involve?
6. How reliable are they?
7. What are the risks in undergoing these tests?
8. Do any of the tests have after effects?
9. What are the consequences if I do not have the test?
10. How should I prepare for them?
11. Are the tests painful?
12. Where and when will I have these tests?
13. Can I have all the tests as an outpatient and can I bring someone with me?
14. How many hours can we expect to be in the hospital?
15. Can I choose whether to have a sedative or general anaesthetic for these tests?
16. How will I get the results (over the phone, at the next appointment, etc.)?
17. How long will it take to get the results of these tests?
18. Where can I get more information about these tests?

If your doctor recommends a biopsy:

1. What type of biopsy do you recommend? Please explain it.
2. Who will perform the biopsy and where will it be done?
3. Will I experience pain during or after the procedure?
4. Will the biopsy leave a scar and, if so, where will it be?
5. After the biopsy, if there is a malignancy, how much time can I take to make up my mind on what type of treatment to have?
6. If I undergo general anaesthesia, can you guarantee that you won't go ahead with surgery other than a biopsy, if that's my preference?
7. How long will it take to get the results of the biopsy?
8. Where can I get more information about this type of biopsy?

Getting Your Test Results

Be informed. Ask questions.

Being informed and asking questions gives you some control over your cancer and may help you cope.

Studies show that people with cancer who are fully informed about their disease and treatment options usually tend to fare better and have fewer side effects than those who simply follow doctors' orders.

Getting answers to your questions

Your doctor should make time to answer your questions and explain the treatment options. If possible, bring a spouse, friend, or relative with you. They can take notes from your conversation with the doctor.

(You might want to bring someone with you when you go to get a diagnosis – he/she can take notes for you).

1. Did any of the tests or examinations indicate I have cancer?

2. If so, which one(s) and what did they show?
3. How reliable is this information?
4. What type of cancer do I have?
5. Where exactly is it located?
6. What is the stage of my cancer?
7. How is staging used to find the best cancer treatment?
8. Do you know how quickly it is likely to grow?
9. What is my prognosis (chance of recovery)?
10. How many people are diagnosed with this type of cancer each year?
11. What are the risk factors for this disease?
12. What are some common symptoms or side effects of this type of cancer?
13. How can I avoid these and/or manage them with my daily activities?
14. Is there anything that can be done to make my symptoms or side effects better?
15. Are there activities that may make them worse?
16. If new symptoms or side effects arise or existing ones worsen, what should I do?
17. Has the cancer spread (metastasised) to my lymph nodes or anywhere else?
18. What are lymph nodes and what do they do?
19. Which lymph nodes might be affected by the cancer?
20. What are the implications of this?
21. What further tests can be done to find out if the cancer has spread?
22. Do I need to have these tests?
23. When and where will I have these tests?
24. When will I get the results?
25. Is this type of cancer caused by genetic factors?
26. Are other members of my family at risk?
27. How much information about my diagnosis should I share, and at what time, with my friends and loved ones?
28. Where can I get more information about this type of cancer?
29. How can I get in touch with others who have had the same cancer?
30. How does a partner or spouse usually react?
31. What can we do to help each other?
32. How can I talk about the changes in my body with my spouse or partner?
33. How do I talk to my friends and family about cancer and my treatment?
34. How do family and friends usually react?
35. What support is available for my family members?
36. Where can I get more detailed information?

Add any additional questions you may have.

Second Opinion

Consider seeking a second opinion about your diagnosis or treatment plan, which may help you feel more confident about your choices.

Most doctors fully understand the value of a second opinion and are not offended when patients seek one.

They may even be able to suggest another doctor.



[Cancer Ireland](http://www.cancerireland.ie)