

Circle Of LifeSM: Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities



American Cancer Society Circle Of LifeSM
Cancer Education and Wellness for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Wellness along the Cancer Journey:
Cancer Types
Revised October 2015
Chapter 11: Appendices



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Appendices

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Appendix A: For Someone with Cancer: What Should I Ask My Health care provider About Cancer?

Working together with the health care provider and other members of their cancer care team is a key part of cancer care. It is usually best to have one health care provider who coordinates all of a person's care. This health care provider should be someone they feel comfortable with. It should be someone who listens to their concerns and answers all of their questions. A health care provider can answer questions, explain the diagnosis, health status, treatment options, and progress throughout treatment.

There will be nurses working with the health care provider who have special training to care for people with cancer. These nurses are there to help a person with treatment and any side effects they may have. In many cases, the nurses can answer their questions. Nurses can also help get the answers a person needs from other members of the health care team.

Like all successful relationships, the relationship with a health care provider is a two-way street. It is the person's responsibility to ask questions and learn about their treatment and health -- to be an active part of their cancer care team.

Health care providers differ in how much information they give to people with cancer and their families. Likewise, people who have cancer also differ in the amount of information they need or want. If a health care provider is giving a person too much or too little information, let them know. The person should feel free to ask them any questions they have, and to tell them about their needs. As in any relationship, speaking clearly and honestly is the key to success.

These are some sample questions a person may want to ask their health care provider after learning they have cancer:

- What type of cancer do I have?
- What is the stage or extent of my cancer? What does the stage mean in my case?
- What is my outlook for survival, as you see it?
- What treatment do you recommend and why?
- What is the goal of this treatment?
- What risks or side effects are there to this treatment?

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- What are the pros and cons of this treatment?
- Are there other treatments that I should think about?
- Are there any clinical trials (research studies) I should look at?
- How often will I need to come in for treatment or tests?
- How long will my treatments last?
- What if I miss a treatment?
- How will my life change? Will I need to make changes in my work, family life, and leisure time?
- What are the names of the drugs I will need? What are they for?
- What other drugs or treatments may I have to take?
- If I don't feel sick, does that mean the treatment is not working?
- How will you know that my treatment is working?
- Why do I need blood tests or scans and how often will I need them?
- If other specialists take part in my care, who will coordinate my entire treatment program?
- How much experience does each of these specialists have in treating my type of cancer?
- Should I get a second opinion? Can you suggest someone?
- What is the best time to call you if I have a question?
- What symptoms or problems should I call you about right away?
- How can I reach you if I have one of these problems during the night or on weekends?
- What are the chances that my cancer may come back after the treatment we've discussed?
- What can I do to be ready for treatment?
- Will I still be able to have children after treatment?
- Are there any foods I should or should not eat during treatment?
- Can I have alcoholic drinks during treatment?
- Will my insurance cover treatment? What costs will I have?

Make sure that all concerns and questions, no matter how small, have been answered. It may take more than one visit to discuss all of a person's concerns, and new questions may come to mind. It may be hard to remember all the health care provider says. Some people find it helps to take notes, bring a family member or friend, or ask if you can record your talks. Others bring a prepared list of questions and write down the health care provider's answers.

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Remember that people have the right to a second opinion about their diagnosis and treatment. Asking for a second opinion does not mean that a person doesn't like or trust their health care provider. Health care providers understand a person needs to feel sure that every chance for the best treatment is being explored. A person can also ask a health care provider whether they have consulted with other specialists at their treatment center.

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