



Questions to Ask the Healthcare Team

When diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, it may feel overwhelming to receive a lot of information from healthcare professionals. Being prepared for meetings with the doctor and other members of the healthcare team can help in gathering the most information and gaining a better understanding of your diagnosis and treatment options.

The following is a list of questions to ask the doctor and other healthcare professionals. It can be very helpful to bring another person along to the appointments. A friend or family member can be supportive, provide an extra set of ears, and ensure all the questions are answered. Tape recording the meeting is a good way to avoid missing important information. First, ask the doctor for permission to record the meeting and then listen to the conversation again at a later time.

Questions about a doctor's experience:

- Where did you receive your medical training and complete your residency?
- Have you ever cared for other people with pancreatic cancer?
- How many people with pancreatic cancer do you care for each year?
- What have been the results for these people? Did they have a similar diagnosis?
- Do you work with a healthcare team? Who are they and what are their specialties?
- For a surgeon: How many surgeries have you performed on people with pancreatic cancer? How many in the past year?

Questions about your diagnosis:

- What is my diagnosis? What type of pancreatic cancer do I have?
- What is the stage of my cancer? What does this mean?
- What are the symptoms that I may experience from the cancer?

Questions about treatment:

- What treatment(s) do you recommend? Why?
- Are there any clinical trials available to me at this hospital? At other local hospitals?
- What are the benefits of each of my treatment options?
- What are the risks of treatment?
- What type of blood tests and scans will I need during my treatment? How often?
- How can I expect to feel during the treatment?
- What about other treatment options such as complementary and alternative therapies?
- Please explain the medications being prescribed for me. What does each one do?

Questions about side-effects:

- What are the potential side effects of my treatment options? How likely are they to occur?
- What medication(s) will be prescribed to help manage my side effects? Do these medications have additional side effects?
- How can I contact you in case of an emergency or if I have further concerns?



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Questions about diet:

- Will my diet need to be changed or modified?
- Do you have a dietitian or nutritionist that you recommend?
- Will I need to take pancreatic enzymes or vitamins? If so, how often do I need to take each one?

Questions about social concerns:

- Will my ability to work be affected?
- Will I need to spend time in the hospital? Will the treatment be on an outpatient basis?
- Will I have physical limitations?
- Will my ability to travel or drive be affected?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I should make?
- Who can I speak with about my financial and/or insurance concerns?
- What support programs are available for myself and my family?

Questions to ask yourself:

- Does my doctor seem interested in my questions? Is the doctor easy to communicate with?
- Did I get enough time with the doctor to answer all of my questions?
- Do I feel that my doctor cares about my medical outcome?
- Will I be able to reach my doctor if I have any questions or concerns while being treated?
- Is my doctor open to me seeking a second opinion?

Even if you feel comfortable with the answers a doctor gives, it might be advantageous to seek a second opinion. Second opinions can be extremely valuable when making decisions about treatment. They can help provide more information about treatment options as well as more confidence in the treatment plan. Ultimately, many doctors welcome hearing the opinions of their colleagues. To receive the names of doctors who specialize in treating pancreatic cancer, contact a Pancreatic Cancer Action Network PALS Associate.

HOW DO I CONTACT A PALS ASSOCIATE?

Contact a PALS Associate toll-free at 877-272-6226 or email pals@pancan.org.

PALS Associates are available M-F 7am-5pm Pacific Time.