



## Questions to Ask the Healthcare Team

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When diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, the amount of information you receive from healthcare professionals may feel overwhelming. Preparing in advance for meetings with the doctor and other members of the healthcare team can help in gathering useful information and gaining a better understanding of your diagnosis and treatment options.

It can be very helpful to bring another person along to medical appointments. A friend or family member can be supportive, provide an extra set of ears, and ensure all questions are answered. Recording the meeting is a good way to avoid missing important information. Ask the doctor for permission to record the meeting and then listen to the conversation at a later time.

The following is a suggested list of questions to ask the doctor and other healthcare professionals.

### 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 multidisciplinary team? Who are they and what are their specialties?

### 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 potential benefits and risks of each of my treatment options?
- Please explain the medications being prescribed for me. What does each one do?
- What type of blood tests, scans or other tests will I need during my treatment? How often?
- What about other treatment options such as complementary and alternative therapies?

### Questions about surgery:

- Can my tumor be removed through surgery? Why or why not?
- How many pancreatic surgeries have you performed? How many in the past year?
- How many pancreatic surgeries are performed at your hospital every year?
- What are the possible complications of pancreatic surgery?
- How long should I expect to be in the hospital recovering after pancreatic surgery?
- Would you be able to recommend another experienced surgeon for a second opinion?



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### Questions about side effects:

- What are the potential side effects of my treatment options? How likely are they to occur?
- How can I expect to feel during the treatment?
- 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?

### Questions about diet:

- Do I need to change or modify my diet?
- Do you have a dietitian or nutritionist that you recommend?
- Will I need to take pancreatic enzymes or vitamins? If so, how often?

### Questions about social concerns:

- Will my ability to work, travel or drive be affected?
- Will I need to spend time in the hospital?
- Will I have physical limitations?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I should make?
- What support programs are available for me and my family?
- Who can I speak with about my financial and/or insurance concerns?
- Who can help me navigate the medical system? Is there an oncology social worker or patient navigator available at this hospital?

### Questions to ask yourself:

- Does the doctor seem interested in my questions? Is he/she easy to communicate with?
- Did I get enough time with the doctor to answer all of my questions?
- Do I feel comfortable with the doctor and his/her recommendations?
- Will I be able to reach him/her if I have any questions or concerns while being treated?
- Is the doctor open to me seeking a second opinion?

Even if you feel comfortable with the answers a doctor gives, it might be beneficial 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. Many doctors welcome hearing the opinions of their colleagues. To receive the names of doctors who specialize in treating pancreatic cancer, contact a PALS Associate at the Pancreatic Cancer Action Network.

### HOW DO I CONTACT A PALS ASSOCIATE?

Contact a PALS Associate toll-free at 877-272-6226 or email [pals@pancan.org](mailto:pals@pancan.org).

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