

Living With and Beyond Cancer Information Sheet

29. Questions about my treatment

Questions about my treatment

Receiving a diagnosis of cancer can be a very worrying and distressing time, and this makes it a particularly difficult time in which to take in any information beyond the fact of the diagnosis. Yet most patients have lots of questions about their cancer and its treatment that may emerge at different times. There is no one time point at which information should be given or received; it should be freely available whenever patients feel they need it. Some people prefer not to learn a great deal about their illness or its treatment and their views must be respected. Although doctors and other medical staff have a professional duty to answer truthfully any questions patients may have, they may not always know the answers.

How can I ensure that my questions are answered?

- Raise any concerns as early as you feel comfortable with a member of your Healthcare Team
- You should always have exactly as much information as you feel you want and your medical team will always be happy to provide it. Of course, it's important to remember that only you know when and how much new information you are ready to have. Cancer and its treatment is often very complicated and it can take a long time to understand everything about it.
- It is often well worth writing down your questions before you attend your appointment, because it can be easy to forget one's questions during the stress of a hospital appointment.
- You have every right to ask any member of the medical team questions about your cancer or its treatment. Healthcare professionals may not offer you information unless you ask it, but they should be routinely asking you if you have any questions. So if you do have a question please ask. All questions are important and should be answered fully, though remember that not all questions have clear answers. Doctors sometimes simply don't know something, but if this is the case they should tell you so.
- Do not be put off asking a question because you think that your question is a silly one or you are repeating a question you have asked before. It can take time to understand fully what you have been told.
- **Never feel embarrassed or shy about asking for clarification.** If the response to your question is not satisfactory then please let the member of staff know so that they can either try explaining again. When in doubt, try repeating back what you have been told you and ask if you've got it right. You can also ask about recommended reading materials about your condition or its treatment.
- If you have a question that requires some privacy, please let the member of staff know.
- The Macmillan Cancer Information and Support Centre at your local cancer centre will have plenty of leaflets and booklets that you may find useful. Furthermore, the staff that work in these centres will do their best to answer your questions.
- Further sources of information are available, such as Macmillan Cancer Support, Marie Curie Cancer Care and CancerHelp UK etc.
- Top tips for outpatient appointments is available

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- continued

TOP TIPS

BEFORE YOUR APPOINTMENT



- Write down your two or three most important questions
- List or bring all your medication and pills – including vitamins and supplements
- Write down details of your symptoms, including when they started and what makes them better or worse
- Ask your hospital or surgery for an interpreter or communication support if needed.
- Ask a friend or family member to come with you, if you like.

DURING YOUR APPOINTMENT

- Don't be afraid to ask if you don't understand. For example, 'Can you say that again?' 'I still don't understand'
- If you don't understand any words, ask for them to be written down and explained.
- Write things down, or ask a family member or friend to take notes.

BEFORE YOU LEAVE YOUR APPOINTMENT



Check that you.....

- ...have covered everything on your list
- ...understand, for example 'Can I just check I understood what you have said?'
- ...know what should happen next – and when. **Write it down!**

ASK

- Who to contact if you have any more problems or questions
- About support groups and where to go for reliable information
- For copies of letters written about you – you are entitled to see these.

AFTER YOUR APPOINTMENT, DON'T FORGET THE FOLLOWING



Write down what you discussed and what happens next.
Book any tests that you can and put dates in your diary.

ASK

- 'What's happening if I'm not sent my appointment details?'
- 'Can I have the results of any tests?'
- If you don't get the results when you expect – **ask** for them and **ask** what the results mean.

29. Questions about my treatment - continued

Questions to askjust to be sure.....

Before you leave your appointment make sure you know the following:

- **What might be wrong? You could ask the following questions:**
Can I check that I've understood what you're said? What you're saying is.....
Can you explain it again? I still don't understand.
Can I have a copy of any letters written about me?
- **What about any further tests, such as blood tests, scans and so on?**
What are the tests for?
How and when will I get the results?
Who do I contact if I don't get the results?

About what treatment, if any, is best for you:

- Are there other ways to treat my condition?
- What do you recommend?
- How long will I need treatment for?
- How will I know if the treatment is working?
- What will happen if I don't have any treatment?
- Is there anything I should stop or avoid doing?
- Is there anything else I can do to help myself?

What happens next and who to contact:

- What happens next? Do I come back to see you?
- Who do I contact if things get worse?
- Do you have written information?
- Where can I go for more information, support group or more help?

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29. Questions about my treatment - Resources/Information

Local Resources:

	Ask GP, Consultant, Cancer Nurse Specialist
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National Resources:

<p>Cancer Research UK, Angel Building 407 St John Street London EC1V 4AD General Enquiries 0300 123 1022 Mon-Fri 8.am—6pm For cancer related queries please call CNS 0808 800 4040 Monday—Friday 9.am—5pm (UK resident only)</p>	<p>National charity that provides a website full of information about the cancer research projects that are going on all over the UK. The helpline is open most of the day but there is also a chat line available online to the Support Services team.</p>
<p>Macmillan Cancer Support Line www.macmillan.org.uk Call 0808 808 00 00 — 7 days a week 8am—8pm</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. Please note that calls to this number are not free when made from outside the UK. If you are calling from outside of the UK call on +44 207 091 2230</p>
<p>Marie Curie Support Line — Living with a terminal illness and looking for support www.mariecurie.org.uk/help/support/marie-curie-support-line</p>	<p>Calls are free of charge from all consumer landlines and mobile phones plus all mobile networks. The Support Line is open 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday and 11am – 5pm Saturday</p>
<p>NHS Choices www.nhs.uk</p>	<p>Your complete on-line guide to conditions, symptoms and treatments, including what to do and when to get help.</p>
<p>Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)</p>	<p>The Main Foyer, Level 2 (ground floor) , North Devon District Hospital, Raleigh Park, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 4JB</p>

Other Resources :

Macmillan Booklets:	Managing cancer pain MAC11670
	Coping with fatigue MAC11664_E08_N
	Coping with hair loss MAC11627_E12N
	Talking about your cancer MAC11646
	How are you feeling? The emotional effects of cancer MAC11593_E05_N
	Understanding chemotherapy MAC11619_E15_N
	Understanding radiotherapy MAC11640_E12_N
	Understanding lymphoedema MAC11651_E15_N