



NEWLY DIAGNOSED

Learning to Communicate Effectively and Ask Important Questions

If you have been recently diagnosed with cancer, you may feel confused or overwhelmed. You may be looking for answers, and you may be wondering which questions to ask your doctor. Asking questions will help you take an active role in managing your care.

For a cancer patient, being able to talk openly and honestly with your healthcare team is very important. Good communication helps you receive the best care.

TIPS FOR COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

- Keep a list of your questions in a designated notebook and take it with you to all appointments.
- Take notes during appointments. Notes may include contact information, dates of future appointments, answers to your questions, and instructions for taking medications.
- Ask for written information about your diagnosis, treatment plan and lab results.
- Share your medical records and lab results with all the healthcare professionals you see. Encourage your providers to talk with each other so you receive more comprehensive care.
- Find out if you need to sign papers to allow your healthcare team to share information with your

caregiver(s) or other healthcare providers about your treatment.

- Before you begin treatment, ask for written information about possible side effects. Ask which side effects should be reported to your treatment team and which side effects warrant a trip to the emergency room. Keep all this information in a safe place. Share copies with your caregiver, too.
- Ask your doctor to slow down or explain things in another way if you have trouble understanding them. If your doctor uses a word you do not know, ask for a definition.
- Ask for information about advance directives. These are legal documents that outline your healthcare wishes in the event that you are unable to communicate. Every person, not just cancer patients, should have advance directives in case of an emergency. **Visit www.LLS.org/booklets to view *Advance Care Planning*.**
- Collect contact information from all of the members of your healthcare team. Add the information to your phone's contact list or take pictures of their business cards.
- Do not withhold information from your healthcare team! Withholding information can be dangerous and it may result in complications, such as side effects, hospitalization or even death. Your relationship with your healthcare team is built on trust.

PRIMARY CONTACT AT DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Name _____
 Phone _____
 Email _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT AT DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Name _____
 Phone _____

All of your questions are important. Do not feel embarrassed to ask them. You deserve to have your concerns addressed.

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM

Before you begin treatment, make sure you understand the answers to the following questions:

- What is my diagnosis? What is my subtype?
- What is the goal of the treatment? What is my prognosis?
- What are my treatment options, including clinical trials?
- How will I receive treatment? Will treatment be outpatient or at home? Or, will I need to stay overnight at the hospital?
- What are the short-term and long-term side effects of treatment? Who can help me manage side effects?
- What can I do to prepare for treatment? How can I keep myself as healthy as possible during treatment?
- Will my fertility (ability to have a biological child) be affected by treatment? If so, what are my options to preserve fertility?
- What kind of testing will be done to monitor my disease and treatment?
- How long do I have to make treatment decisions?
- Where can I find more information about my diagnosis and treatment?
- Where can I turn to for help with financial or practical questions?
- Is there an online patient portal I can access to view my information? If so, how do I access it?

To collect all the information you need throughout diagnosis, treatment, follow-up care and long-term management of a blood cancer, visit www.LLS.org/SurvivorshipWorkbook to view *Navigating Life During and After a Blood Cancer Diagnosis*. There is a version of the workbook for adults, young adults and children/adolescents.

Visit www.LLS.org/WhatToAsk for the full **Communicating With Your Healthcare Team** series and printable question guides.

Update Your Healthcare Team

Share the following with your healthcare team:

- Your personal medical history, including past diagnoses, surgeries, procedures and hospitalizations
- Your family medical history
- All medications, including vitamins, supplements and over-the-counter medications
 - Do not start or stop taking any new medications, vitamins or supplements without consulting with your doctor.
- Allergies to medications, foods, latex or other materials
- Alcohol, smoking and recreational drug use
- Family plans such as pregnancy, breast feeding, and future plans to conceive
- New or worsening symptoms or side effects
- Travel plans
- Changes in health insurance coverage
- Changes to your contact information such as your phone number or address

GET ONE-ON-ONE SUPPORT

The Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's **Information Specialists**, highly trained oncology social workers and nurses, can provide information and support and connect you to our **Clinical Trial Support Center** and **Registered Dietitians**.

- Call **800.955.4572** Mon.-Fri. 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. (ET)
- Visit www.LLS.org/PatientSupport

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