

When you have cancer...asking questions is important.

Questions to ask a haematologist

Asking questions is important

When you see a haematologist today you may have questions and concerns. Often these are forgotten in the heat of the moment, only to be remembered later.

We have compiled a list of questions to help you to get the information you want about your illness and possible treatments. You and your family can use this pamphlet to help you decide what you need to ask your haematologist each time you have an appointment.

Tick the questions that you want to ask or write down any that are not listed. Your haematologist is keen to answer any questions you may have, either now or at future consultations. If your questions have already been answered, then this pamphlet can serve as a checklist. Remember you can ask your haematologist to explain anything you are unclear about or to explain any words you are not familiar with.

Diagnosis

What kind of cancer do I have?
Where is the cancer at the moment? Has it spread to other parts of my body?
How common is my cancer?

Tests

Are there any further tests that I need to have?
What will they tell us? Will they confirm my diagnosis?
What will I experience when having the test/s?
Are the tests performed here?

Prognosis

How bad is this cancer and what is it going to mean for me?
What symptoms will the cancer cause?
Will the treatment cure the cancer or just control it and manage symptoms?
What is likely to happen with treatment?
What is the expected survival for people with my type of cancer?
Is the treatment going to improve my chance of survival?
How likely is it that the treatment will improve my symptoms? Is it worth going through?
Will the treatment or illness reduce my sexual drive or fertility?

Treatment and information options

Treatment options

Is it necessary to have treatment right now?

If so, do I have a choice of treatments?

What are the pros and cons of each treatment option?

What can I expect if I decide not to have treatment?

How much time do I have to think about this?

Do you need my decision today?

What is your opinion about the best treatment for me?

Will I need a bone marrow transplant?

Treatment plan

What exactly will be done during the treatment and how will it affect me? When are these effects likely to happen?

What is the treatment schedule, e.g. how many treatments will I have, how often, and for how long will I have treatment?

Where will I have the treatment?

Are there any advantages/disadvantages of the private versus public health system?

Preparing for treatment

Is there anything that I can do before or after my treatment that might make it more effective, e.g. diet, work, exercise?

What are the do's and don'ts while having treatment?

What problems should I look out for and who do I contact if they occur?

What are the side effects? Will I lose my hair?

Are there long-term side effects from the treatment?

Will I need any additional treatment after this?

If so, what might that be?

What is my long-term follow up plan?

Clinical trials

What are clinical trials? Are there any that might be relevant for me?

Will I be treated any differently if I enrol in a trial?

Costs

What will be the costs throughout my treatment, e.g. medication, chemotherapy, etc?

Am I eligible for any benefits if I cannot work?

Optimal Care

Do you specialise in treating my type of cancer?

How well established is the treatment you are recommending?

Are there guidelines on how to treat my cancer?

Is there another specialist who treats this type of cancer that you recommend for a second opinion?

Multidisciplinary teams

Do you work in a multidisciplinary team and what does this mean?

Can you explain the advantages of a team approach?

How do you all communicate with each other and me?

Who will be in charge of my care?

What do I do if I get conflicting information?

Support information

What information is available about my cancer and its treatment, e.g. books, videos, websites, etc?

Are there any complementary therapies that you believe may be helpful or that are known to be bad for me?

Is there someone I can talk to who has been through this treatment?

Are there services/support groups that can help me and my family deal with this illness?

Do I need to see a dentist?

Should I give up work?

Asking questions is important

Please keep this question list as it will be useful for you and your family in future consultations.

Write down any questions you may think of that are not listed above.

cancer and doctor-patient communication. The group consists of researchers from varied backgrounds including psychology, medicine, public health and nursing.

For more information visit the website at:
www.psych.usyd.edu.au/cemped/

The Cancer Institute NSW is Australia's first statewide, government-supported agency dedicated to the control and cure of cancer through prevention, detection, innovation, research and information.

For more information visit the website at:
www.cancerinstitute.org.au

*Cancer Institute NSW catalogue number:
CB-2008-4
SHPN: (CI) 08/019
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