

Cancer: Clinical Trials Research



If you're facing a cancer diagnosis and deciding on treatment, you may wonder if a clinical trial could help. A clinical trial is a research study that tests new medical treatments or new ways of giving care.

Clinical trials can help researchers find better ways to prevent, screen for, diagnose, and treat a disease. They help answer questions such as:

- Can a new medicine prevent cancer?
- Does a new screening test save lives?
- Can taking a new medicine after treatment help a person live longer?

Before you decide whether to take part, make sure you know what is involved. Remember, clinical trials are not right for everyone. And it's normal to have questions and concerns about enrolling in a clinical trial instead of having standard treatment. But know that every cancer treatment available today was first tested in a clinical trial before it was approved as a standard treatment option.

Who can join a clinical trial?

All clinical trials have eligibility criteria that state who can participate. You may need to have a certain type or stage of cancer, be a certain age, or have a certain health history. Your healthcare provider and the research team can help you know if you are eligible for certain trials.

How can I find a clinical trial to join?

Your healthcare provider can tell you about clinical trial options. Sometimes they may only be offered at larger medical facilities or in other cities or states. You can also look online at ClinicalTrials.gov or on the [National Cancer Institute website](https://www.nationalcancerinstitute.gov).

How can a clinical trial help?

Treatments tested in clinical trials may go on to save countless lives. By joining a trial, you could be a part of this important work. In return, you may:

- Get the new treatment before it is available to the public
- Take a more active role in your treatment

A clinical trial may give some participants the kind of treatment they need. The new medicine may work better than traditional standard approaches. You may also benefit from the extra care clinical trials provide. Often, people in clinical trials have more frequent checkups. You may also be asked about your experiences more often.

What are the risks of being in a clinical trial?

Clinical trials are not without risks. These might include:

- You may have serious side effects or discomfort. But it is important to note that new treatments are tested before they are used on trial participants.
- The new treatment may not be effective.
- Some aspects of the trial may be inconvenient. You might need more medical appointments. Or you

might need to travel to the study site and even stay in the hospital.

- There could be costs that are not covered by your health insurance. Find out what's covered before enrolling.

The research team will keep a close watch on your health. If the treatment proves unhelpful for you, they will intervene. Laws and strict procedures help protect your safety. You may also choose to remove yourself from a clinical trial at any time. Your participation is voluntary.

Questions to ask before joining a trial

If you're thinking about joining a clinical trial, make a list of questions to ask your provider and the study research team. You can find suggestions from the NCI at www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/treatment/clinical-trials/questions. Some helpful questions are:

- What are the risks of this trial? What are the benefits?
- What is the purpose of the trial?
- How long will I be in the trial?
- Who is watching out for any problems?
- Who will be in charge of my care?
- What kind of treatments and tests are involved in the trial?
- How could the trial affect my daily life?
- Where do I need to go for care?
- How will my health information be kept private?
- What happens if I want to stop participating in the trial?
- Which costs do I have to pay if I take part in the trial?

How are participants protected?

You will get information on the benefits, risks, and details of the trial before you decide to join. You will then sign a consent form stating you agree to participate. You may leave the trial at any time.

All trials are reviewed by a group called an institutional review board (IRB). This group makes sure the study follows federal laws and keeps participants safe. The IRB must approve a study based on certain criteria before it is open to enrolling participants.

Participation is personal

Only you can decide whether to participate in a clinical trial. Rest assured, your cancer care will not be affected either way. It's OK if you decide that a clinical trial is not right for you. You will keep working with your healthcare team to find treatment options that fit your needs.

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