

Esophageal Cancer: Treatment Questions



Talking with healthcare providers about cancer can be overwhelming. It can be hard to take in all of the information. It helps to be prepared. Make a list of questions and take it to your appointments. Write the answers down. Make sure you ask how the treatment might change your daily life, including your diet and how you'll look and feel after treatment. Ask how well the treatment is expected to work, and what the risks and possible side effects are.

You may want to ask a friend or family member to go with you. They can take notes and write down answers. They might also ask questions you may not think of.

Here are some questions you may want to ask during your appointments. Not all of these might apply to you. But asking the questions that do apply can help you get a better idea of what to expect.

Deciding on a treatment

- Where is the cancer? Has it spread beyond where it started?
- What kind of esophageal cancer is it?
- Do I need any more tests before we decide on treatment?
- What are my treatment choices?
- Will I be able to eat during treatment? What will we do if I can't?
- What treatment do you think is best for me? Why?
- What are the goals of treatment?
- What is the success rate of this treatment for my type and stage of cancer?
- What are the chances that the cancer will come back after treatment?
- What is the average life expectancy for someone with my stage of cancer getting treatment?
- How much experience do you have treating cancers like mine?
- Do I need to see other kinds of healthcare providers?
- Who will be leading my overall treatment?
- Should I get a second opinion?
- Are there any clinical trials I should look into?

Getting ready for treatment

- How soon do I need to start treatment?
- What can I do to get ready for treatment?
- What will treatment be like?
- How long will each treatment take?
- Where do I have to go for the treatment?

- Who will give me the treatment?
- Does someone need to be with me during treatments?
- Can I drive myself or take public transportation to treatment?
- Do you have someone on staff who can help me with transportation, financial concerns, or other resources?
- Can I take my other medicines during treatment?
- How long will I be in treatment?
- Will I need a feeding tube?
- Will my insurance cover treatment? How much will I have to pay?

Coping during treatment

- How will I feel during and after the treatment?
- Are there any limits on what I can do?
- Will I be able to go to work and be around my family during treatment?
- What side effects can I expect?
- How long will side effects last?
- Will there be side effects I need to call you about?
- How do I reach you at night? On weekends? Holidays?
- What can I do to ease the side effects?
- How will we know if treatment is working?
- Are there support groups nearby that I can join?

After treatment

- How will I feel after the treatment?
- What type of follow-up will I need after treatment?
- Who will be in charge of my follow-up care?
- What kind of tests will I need and how often will I need them?
- Do I need to follow a special diet?
- Are there any limits on what I can do?
- Will I need any type of rehab therapy after treatment?
- How will we know if treatment worked?
- How will I know if the cancer comes back? What should I watch for?
- What are my choices if the treatment doesn't work, or the cancer comes back?

- Who will make my [survivorship care plan](#)? This is a care plan tailored to you to help keep track of and maintain your health once your cancer treatment is finished.

Making a decision

When you have answers from your healthcare provider, it's time to think about what you want. Think about what side effects and long-term changes you can and can't deal with. Talk about all of your concerns with your healthcare team, family, and friends before making a decision about treatment.

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