



Treatment Tips & Questions to Ask Your Medical Oncology Team

Treatment Tips: Getting Organized

A **notebook** is one of the most important tools you have throughout your cancer treatment and beyond. Take the notebook with you to every doctor's visit, every exam, every consultation, and every hospitalization. Take notes of **EVERYTHING**.

- ☐ Get a large **folder** or three-ring binder, larger than you think you'll need. Find a dedicated place for it in your home.
- ☐ Consider purchasing a **printer**, if you don't already have one. You may need hard copies of documents to bring to doctor consultations. Although many health records are electronic, if you get a second opinion, the doctor may not have access to the record keeping system of your other doctors.
- ☐ Get a simple but good quality **writing pad**, and a **ballpoint or gel ink pen** to go with it.
- ☐ **Write questions down** before and after appointments to have answered by your appropriate team member.
- ☐ Record **dates and times of your treatments** and consider saving them on your phone and setting reminders.

Note: None of the information provided on this sheet constitutes medical or legal advice. Always consult with your medical care team. This compilation of questions is not comprehensive and is only meant for educational purposes. This information has been compiled from online resources such as cancer.net, breastcancer.org, and from those diagnosed with breast cancer in our survivingbreastcancer.org community. If you would like to add to this list, please contact info@survivingbreastcancer.org.



- ☐ Record your **symptoms** after each treatment (both physical and emotional, as well as any other issues that may pop up during treatment).
- ☐ Keep track of **medications**, names of **chemotherapy drugs**, and other relevant information you may have to refer back to.
- ☐ Keep track of your **nutrition** (whether you're eating or not, liquid intake, etc.).

Tips and questions for your medical oncologist:

A [medical oncologist](#) is a doctor who has special training in diagnosing and treating cancer in adults using chemotherapy, hormonal therapy, biological therapy, and targeted therapy. A medical oncologist often is the main health care provider for someone who has cancer. A medical oncologist also gives supportive care and may coordinate treatment given by other specialists.

- ☐ Always **ask for more information** if you don't understand something, or ask for the information to be explained in another way to ensure your understanding.
- ☐ If possible, **bring someone with you** to use as a resource and a second pair of ears ("Did I hear that correctly? Did the doctor say...?")
- ☐ Let your oncologist know how you want to receive information (in **writing, listening, pictures**, etc.)
- ☐ What **type** of breast cancer do I have?
- ☐ Is my breast cancer **hormonally** driven?

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- ☐ What is my **HER2** status, and what does this mean?
- ☐ What **stage** is my cancer and what does that stage mean?
- ☐ What is the difference between a **stage** and a **grade**?
- ☐ Can I have a print out of my **pathology report**? Can we review it together?
- ☐ Who are the specialists/people involved in my treatment and what is their role (**nurse navigator, radiation oncologist**)?
- ☐ What are the **risks and benefits** of my treatment options?
- ☐ Am I a candidate for **chemotherapy**? If so, what will the treatment regimen look like?
- ☐ Will I have chemotherapy **before or after surgery**?
- ☐ Can I **work** during treatment?
- ☐ Will I have a **port for chemotherapy**? What are the benefits and concerns of having a chemotherapy port?
- ☐ How much **experience** do you have treating my specific type of breast cancer?
- ☐ What if I don't want to do the treatment you suggest? What are the risks? Do I have **other options**?
- ☐ Should I get a **second opinion**?
- ☐ What **clinical trials** are available?
- ☐ What testing will I receive throughout treatment to gauge my **response** to treatment?
- ☐ How do I know if the cancer has **spread**?
- ☐ What are the **long-term side effects** of different treatments (lymphedema, thyroid issues, sexual dysfunction, etc.)?

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- ☐ Can I have a referral for **physical therapy**?
- ☐ Can I use **marijuana** during treatment and what is best (gummies, flower, best strain)?

Questions for your oncology nurse:

An oncology nurse (or, in some hospitals, a nurse navigator, [patient navigator](#), or patient advocate) is a healthcare professional who is a specialized registered personal advocate. They can help you navigate your treatment process and answer questions for you. They assess emotional, clinical, financial, psychological, spiritual and other patient needs.

- ☐ What should I bring with me to treatment?
- ☐ What can I do to manage the potential **side effects** of treatment?
- ☐ When will my **hair start falling out**?
- ☐ Can I **prevent my hair from falling out**? Can I get information about cold capping, and how do I determine whether it is covered by my insurance?
- ☐ How can I access **alternative therapies** such as massage, reiki, or acupuncture to help with my symptoms?
- ☐ Where can I go to get **wigs, head wraps, or scarves**? Are they covered under insurance?
- ☐ Is special **skin care** recommended during treatment?

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- ☐ What **makeup** do other patients like to use during chemo (eyebrows, fake eyelashes, etc.)?
- ☐ Who can I speak with for questions about **insurance/billing**?
- ☐ What **support networks** are available to me through the hospital and beyond (SBC, complimentary)?
- ☐ What **mental health resources** are available during and after treatment?
- ☐ Is there a **current cancer patient** (my type) I can connect with?
- ☐ Who do I call if I feel like **something is wrong**?
- ☐ Will I have access to someone to **answer my questions** 24/7?
- ☐ Is it best to **call, email, or text** if I have a problem?

Helpful Links:

<https://www.survivingbreastcancer.org/>

<https://www.survivingbreastcancer.org/newly-diagnosed>

<https://www.cancer.net/>

<https://www.breastcancer.org/>

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