

# QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR DOCTOR

**PANCREATIC  
CANCER CANADA**

When you are diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, it may feel overwhelming to receive a lot of information from healthcare professionals. Being prepared for your appointments with the doctor can help you gain a better understanding of your diagnosis and your treatment options.

Here are some suggested questions to ask during your appointments:

## AT DIAGNOSIS

- What is the stage of my cancer and what does it mean? Has the cancer spread? If so, where has it spread?
- Can I get genetic testing done? How would this type of testing inform treatment options? How long does it take to get the results back?
- Can I get copies of my medical records and how do I go about doing this?
- What are the symptoms that I may experience from the cancer?
- Do I need any more tests to find out whether I qualify for surgery?
- Do you have an oncologist at this hospital who specializes in pancreatic cancer?
- What are my treatment options? What are the benefits of each form of treatment? What do you suggest for me and why?
- What can I do to prepare for treatment, and do I need to stay in the hospital? If so, for how long?
- What are the risks and side effects of each treatment?
- Do you suggest clinical trials as a form of treatment? If not, why are clinical trials not right for me?
- Will my ability to work be affected?
- Are there any lifestyle changes I need to make? If so, are there additional resources or referrals you can provide to support these changes?
- Are there supports available at the hospital? (things to include: transportation to and from chemotherapy, financial support, resources, childcare during treatments, social workers, etc.)

## DURING TREATMENT

- For a surgeon: How many surgeries have you performed on people with pancreatic cancer? How many in the past year?
- How do you measure my response to treatment? Will you be checking tumour markers such as CA19-9?
- How will you manage my pain?
- Are there other practitioners that should be involved in my care, for example the pain team or palliative care? If so, can you offer referrals or support me in finding these additional practitioners?
- Will my diet need to change, and do you have a dietician I can consult?
- Do I need to take pancreatic enzyme supplements to manage side effects?

## PREPARING FOR APPOINTMENTS

During treatment, it may be helpful to send questions in advance of each appointment with your oncologist - it gives them a chance to think about the questions beforehand and will help you to feel less rushed. Here are some categories of questions to consider including:

### 1. UPDATE ON SYMPTOMS / SIDE EFFECTS

Note any new symptoms as well as any treatment-related side effects. It is important to address changes because it could be a sign of something new or something that could be better managed once shared.

### 2. MEDICATIONS/SUPPLEMENTS

Note any changes to medications (prescribed by other doctors), any refills needed from your team, as well as any new supplements added.

### 3. PROCEDURES OR UPDATES FROM OTHER DOCTORS

Note any other procedures from other doctors because the systems aren't always well connected.

## **4. DIET / NUTRITION / EXERCISE**

Share updates on any struggles or improvements with diet, nutrition and digestion. The oncologist and nurse are experts in how to manage pancreatic enzyme doses and bowel related issues. There are also nutritionists they may recommend seeing or changes that can be made to the type of enzymes prescribed. Exercise is also good to update on as it can help inform how you're handling treatment

## **5. TREATMENT AND TRIAL RELATED QUESTIONS**

List any questions on recent scans, tumour markers, any treatment questions / changes. Also include any questions on clinical trials that may be promising or worth looking into.

## **ASK AN EXPERT**

We know you have lots of questions, which is why we created our Ask An Expert service. We have a team of medical specialists ready to answer questions between your doctor's appointments and provide information to help patients and families make informed decisions about care and treatment options for this disease. This service is free to use and available no matter your location.

Learn more on our website:

<https://pancreaticcancerCanada.ca/patient-and-family-support/ask-an-expert/>