

Questions For Your Oncologist

You have the opportunity to learn about your cancer diagnosis and understand the rationale behind each step of the treatment plan in conversations with your oncologist and care team. Here are a few questions to consider asking after a lung cancer diagnosis:

What is my official diagnosis and what stage is my cancer?

Feel free to ask for the doctor to write down the diagnosis or direct you to this information on your patient portal. Good follow up questions are: Is this type of cancer common or rare? How aggressive is this type of cancer? How many people do you see per year with this type of cancer?

Is there a prognosis for my type of cancer?

Doctors may not offer this information without prompting so this could be a good question to ask if the answer would benefit your mental health. You can also ask if there are different prognoses associated with available treatment options.

May we run a full biomarker test?

Biomarkers are genomic indicators in your tumor that qualify you for targeted therapies. Although your biomarker test results may not be used to select your first treatment, this information may be helpful in choosing any subsequent therapies.

What are the side effects of the treatments? Will they impact my lifestyle?

Different medicines will have different types of side effects. Discuss with your doctor both the potential benefits and risks of the treatment options, and how best to incorporate the chosen treatment plan into your lifestyle.

Should we explore whether I'm a good candidate for a clinical trial?

Participation in clinical trials broadens the potential treatment options that may be available to you but are currently under evaluation with the FDA. Your doctor should guide you in this exploration.

Would it be helpful to see a specialist or get a second opinion?

Oncologists can specialize in specific types of cancer and your hospital may connect you with the best doctor, but it doesn't hurt to ask your oncologist whether you should get a second opinion. Patients very often get second opinions, and your doctor should not be surprised or offended by the question.

Are there any changes I should implement now or in the future to stay in the best possible shape?

Nutrition, exercise, and sleep are all important contributors to your overall health and may have an impact on your body's response to your cancer treatment(s). You can also ask whether someone on the care team is better positioned to guide you in this process.

Are there supportive care resources that will support my mental and emotional health?

There is a wealth of information and specialized communities that support patients newly diagnosed with lung cancer. Your health care team should be able to point you towards your hospital's support services and regional opportunities around the country.

What next steps should I take during my next appointment?

Be clear on the action plan before your doctor leaves the room and know where to locate this on your patient portal. It's a good idea to compile a list of follow-up questions or concerns to address at your next appointment.

What's the best way to reach you and your office?

Hospitals will have different types of communication systems and support structures to assist you between appointments. Learn the best way to communicate so you have confidence in timely responses as needs arise.