

When you have cancer...asking questions is important

Questions to ask a surgeon

When you see a surgeon today you may have questions and concerns. Often these are forgotten in the heat of the moment, only to be remembered later.

We have compiled a list of questions to help you to get the information you want about your illness and possible treatments. You and your family can use this pamphlet to help you decide what you need to ask your surgeon at your next appointment.

Tick the questions that you want to ask or write down any that are not listed. Your surgeon is keen to answer any questions you may have, either now or at future consultations. If your questions have already been answered, then this pamphlet can serve as a checklist.

Remember you can ask your surgeon to explain anything you are unclear about or to explain any words you are not familiar with.

Diagnosis

What kind of cancer do I have?

Where is the cancer at the moment? Has it spread to other parts of my body?

How common is my cancer?

Tests

Are there any further tests that I need to have?

What will they tell us? Will they confirm my diagnosis?

What will I experience when having the test/s?

Prognosis

How bad is this cancer and what is it going to mean for me?

How likely is it that the cancer will spread to other parts of my body?

What is the aim of surgery? To cure the cancer or to control it and manage symptoms?

What is the expected survival for people with my type of cancer?

Is the surgery going to improve my chance of survival?

What is the best case scenario? What is the worst case scenario?

Treatment and information options

Treatment options

Is surgery absolutely necessary?

Do I have a choice of treatments?

How much time do I have to think about this? Do you need my decision today?

Are there any advantages/disadvantages of the private versus public health system?

Can I have the surgery earlier if I pay for it?

What is your opinion about the best treatment for me?

Surgery plan

Could plans to operate on me change? Why?

Will it be you doing the surgery?

When will I meet the anaesthetist?

Will I require a blood transfusion?

Is there anything I can do before or after surgery to assist my recovery?

Effects of the surgery

What effects should I expect after the surgery?

When are these likely to happen?

How long do you expect me to be in hospital and what would change that?

What problems should I look out for when I go home and who do I contact if they occur?

Is there any written information that I can take home about my after-care?

What are the do's and don'ts in after-care?

What can I expect from the operation long-term eg. exercise, diet, work, sexuality etc?

Will I need any additional treatment after the surgery?

If so, what might that be?

Costs

What will be the costs throughout my treatment e.g. medication, operation costs etc?

Am I eligible for any benefits if I cannot work?

Optimal Care

Do you specialise in treating my type of cancer?

How often have you done this type of surgery?

How well established is this surgery?

Are there guidelines on how to treat my cancer?

Multidisciplinary teams

Do you work in a multidisciplinary team and what does this mean?

Can you explain the advantages of a team approach?

For more information visit the website at:
www.psych.usyd.edu.au/cemped/

The Cancer Institute NSW is Australia's first statewide, government-supported agency dedicated to the control and cure of cancer through prevention, detection, innovation, research and information.

For more information visit the website at:
www.cancerinstitute.org.au

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