



I Was Just Diagnosed with Cancer - Now What Do I Do?

Douglas M. Silverstein, M.D.

**<http://champsagainstcancer.org>
championsagainstcancer@gmail.com**

Gather Your Cancer Support Team

- **Start gathering your personal team. You must be surrounded and supported by family and friends, but most important, those that will provide comfort and support.**
- **Tell your trusted family and friends about how they can help. This is no time for pride.**
- **Receiving and deciphering medical information is challenging for anyone at any time. Don't try to know it all at the start. Bring an educated person to help translate the messages.**

The Emotions of Cancer-I

- **Accept the reality that you have cancer. Many people have cancer, so you are not alone.**
- **Even if you think you did something (eg, smoked cigarettes) that caused your cancer, DON'T BLAME YOURSELF - it is unproductive and can only reduce your chance to beat the cancer.**
- **Gather your feelings and either talk about them openly, or find another way (eg, writing) to express yourself, even if only you can see what you have written.**
- **Control what you can and don't worry about what you cannot.**

The Emotions of Cancer-II

- **Tell your family and close friends.**
- **List and assign people to take care of your everyday needs.**
- **Remember that cancer survival statistics apply to large groups of people – not necessarily to you.**
- **The immediate shock will abate, but throughout your disease, your feelings will constantly change.**

First Steps with Your Doctor

- 1) Find out what type of cancer it is.**
- 2) Medicine is a separate language. If you do not understand what you are hearing or reading, ask for explanations. Doctors that are impatient to explain the disease to you are not worthy of your time.**
- 3) Get details about the cancer such as the location and how big the areas of involvement (lesions) are.**
- 4) Learn if it is a slow or fast growing cancer.**
- 5) Ascertain potential treatments and the likelihood that each treatment will control the cancer.**
- 6) Learn about the side effects of each treatment. Remember: there is benefit and risk with each therapy, and the balance is crucial.**

Your Visit with the Cancer Doctor (Oncologist)-Part I

- **Find a specialist. Your doctor should help you do this. Do research- internet, talking with friends, etc.**
- **Ensure that cancer is the correct diagnosis. GET A SECOND OPINION, NO MATTER WHAT. Even if the diagnosis is correct, treatments vary.**
- **Talk candidly with your doctor about your feelings. The doctor needs to understand right away what your personal and family goals and needs are.**
- **Be an information sponge. If you are not prepared to start searching available sources, find an advocate.**

Your Visit with the Cancer Doctor (Oncologist)-Part II

Ask about:

- **The best cancer treatment centers in your region and across the nation**
- **The type of treatment that is best for your cancer**
- **Clinical Trials: Cancer therapy is often based on experience with other patients with a similar disease (standard therapy). If your the cancer is not responding to standard therapy, or is a rare or unique type of cancer, you may be eligible to receive treatment in a research study called a clinical trial. Participation in a clinical trial may be your best chance for successful therapy. **EARLY ON, ASK YOUR DOCTOR ABOUT WHICH CLINICAL TRIALS MIGHT BE RIGHT FOR YOUR DISEASE.****

Your Visit with the Cancer Doctor (Oncologist)-Part III

- **Genetic testing:**
 - **Some cancers are caused by abnormalities or peculiarities in the inherited material in our body called genes**
 - **For your cancer: Gene or genetic testing can help predict your expected response to therapy and guide the type of treatment you should get**
 - **For your family members: This can tell them of their risk for developing a similar type of cancer**

There Are Many Resources To Help You

- **Learn about your insurance coverage. Cancer is a very financially costly disease and health care costs are the leading cause of bankruptcy in the United States.**
- **There are many cancer support groups, many being specific for each type of cancer. These groups provide education, funds, and advice about the best centers and treatment options.**

Once the Diagnosis is Confirmed, For What Reasons Should I Call My Doctor

- **A good and caring facility will ensure that doctors are available at times other than your scheduled appointments. That is their job. If they are not available, find another doctor. There are many good cancer doctors in most regions.**
- **If you develop fever, difficulty breathing, significant pain, bleeding, or other serious symptoms, call your cancer doctor immediately. They may refer you to a local doctor or emergency room, but they need to know regardless.**

References and Resources

American Cancer Society:

<http://www.cancer.org/acs/groups/cid/documents/webcontent/002813-pdf.pdf>

Web MD:

<http://www.webmd.com/cancer/features/6-ways-to-conquer-a-scary-diagnosis>

National Cancer Institute:

<http://www.cancer.gov/publications/patient-education/taking-time>

Family Cancer Center:

<http://www.familycancercenter.com/coping-with-cancer/ive-been-newly-diagnosed-with-cancer-now-what/>