

Questions to ask your doctor about diagnosis and treatment

A colorectal cancer diagnosis can be overwhelming. The following questions may help you discuss your diagnosis and treatment with your healthcare providers.

NEWLY DIAGNOSED

- What stage is my cancer and what does that mean for me?
- Has the cancer had a chance to spread? If so, where has it spread to and what effect will this have?
- Will I have a CT or PET scan to find out if my cancer has spread?
- Would you suggest I get a second opinion?
- What are my treatment options? Will I have more than one kind of treatment?
- Will I need surgery?
- If I need a surgery, will I need an ostomy? Will it be temporary or permanent?
- What team of doctors do I need to coordinate my care? Which of those doctors should I see next?
- How will this affect my quality of life?
- How can I best explain my diagnosis to my family and friends?
- Do you have a social worker and/or peer navigator to help me?
- Do you know of any local support groups?
- What are my next steps from here?

BEFORE TREATMENT

- How can we decide what treatment option is best for me?
- What are biomarkers? Should I get tested for biomarkers before starting therapy?
- What is chemotherapy? What are targeted therapies? How do the two differ?
- Am I a candidate for immunotherapy?
- How much experience do you have treating my type of cancer and this stage of cancer?
- How will my treatment(s) be administered? How often will I need to come in for treatment?
- What should I do to get ready for my treatment?
- What side effects should I expect from treatment?
- Will treatment affect my appearance? If so, are there options?
- Will treatment affect my ability to work?
- Would treatment affect my ability for intimacy? Would treatment affect my fertility and are there a way to preserve it?
- Should I consider participating in a clinical trial? If so, what is available? Could you share resources for me to find available clinical trials?
- Who do I contact for financial assistance?
- Can I speak to someone who has chosen the same treatment plan as me?
- How will my treatment affect my family? What do they need to know?
- Can I combine natural/holistic medicines while on treatment?

IN TREATMENT

- How am I responding to my current treatment?
- Would another kind of treatment work better?
- What side effects should I expect during treatment?
- If I don't have symptoms, does this mean the cancer is under control?
- I have been feeling better lately. Am I in remission?
- Should I consider participating in a clinical trial? If so, what is available? What are the potential risks and benefits of participating?
- If I have an important family event, can we arrange treatment around that?

SIDE EFFECTS

- Are the side effects manageable? Are there tips for managing the side effects?
- Should I report any side effects I am experiencing to a particular person/team?
- Will these side effects impact how well my treatment works?
- What should I do if I start to feel poorly during and/or after treatment?
- Who do I call if I need after hours help with side effects?
- Will treatment affect my appearance? If so, are there options?
- Are there medications available to prevent side effects before they get bad?
- How do we decide when the side effects are too great and I need a treatment break (or reduction in dosage)?

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The Colorectal Cancer Alliance is a national organization committed to ending colorectal cancer within our lifetime. We are your allies — a national network of passionate survivors, caregivers and advocates dedicated to helping you and your family navigate all aspects of the disease, from diagnosis and treatment to a lifetime of progression-free survival. We are a community of people eager to share experiences, address your concerns, and answer your questions. We understand the different stages of the colon cancer journey because we've been there. We are here for you when you need us because we believe tomorrow can't wait.

