



How to better understand your cancer diagnosis or stage

Online version at: <http://cancer-help.me/diagnosis>

Understanding your diagnosis

Cancer is the name given to a group of related diseases. Cancer can start any place in the body. In all types of cancers, some of the body's cells begin to divide without stopping and may spread and grow out of control and crowd out normal cells. It is important to know the specific type of cancer you have been diagnosed with.

Take an active role in your cancer care by asking questions and using resources available from your care team. Question examples:

- What type of cancer do I have?
- Where is it located?
- What are the risk factors for this disease?
- Is this type of cancer caused by genetic factors? Are other members of my family at risk?
- What lifestyle changes—such as diet, exercise, and rest—should I make to be healthy before, during, and after treatment?
- Where can I find more information about this type of cancer?

Help with understanding

The unfamiliar medical language may be confusing. Ask your care team to explain any medical terms you don't understand. Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for something to be repeated or said in a different way for better understanding.

Consider bringing a family member or friend to your appointments to help listen and take notes. You could also ask for permission to recording doctor visits. You can replay it later for yourself or others.

What is cancer staging?

Cancer staging is a process of using different tests and examinations to find out how much cancer there is and where it is located.

- Specialized tests are often used to determine how much the cancer has grown within tissue removed from your body.
- Imaging tests, pictures of the insides of your body, may also be used for cancer staging. The pictures allow your doctors to see where the cancer has grown and possibly has spread.
- Sometimes other information is needed to determine where and how much cancer is in your body.

Cancer staging is important. It gives the doctor information to be able to choose the best options for your treatment. It also gives information about possible outlook, or prognosis.

The stage of cancer is determined only at diagnose. It does not change over time, even if the cancer shrinks, grows, spreads or comes back.

Information online

Additional information can be found online. See below for respected, trustworthy resources. Learning about your specific treatment will help you make informed treatment decisions.

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [NCCN, What is Cancer?](#)
- [NCCN, Understanding a Diagnosis](#)
- [NCCN, Cancer Staging Guide](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Diagnosing Cancer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Stages of Cancer](#)
- [NIH, Understanding Cancer](#)
- [NIH, Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Your Diagnosis](#)
- [American Cancer Society, 24/7 questions about cancer or need help finding resources, 800-227-2345](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Understanding Your Diagnosis](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Cancer Staging](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Diagnóstico y estadificación](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Materiales educativos para el paciente](#)