



How to better understand your prognosis or possible outcomes

Online version at : cancer-help.me/prognosis

Understanding Your Prognosis

The likely course of how your disease will go for you is called prognosis. It can be hard to understand what a prognosis means and can sometimes be hard to talk about for everyone involved. Yet, many people want to know their prognosis. For some, having a better understanding of their cancer and what to expect can often be helpful in making decisions. Some decisions you may face include:

- Which treatment is best for you
- If you want treatment
- How best to care for yourself and which side effects you are willing to go through
- Practical planning to address personal affairs

If you do decide you want to know more, your doctor knows the most about your situation and is in the best position to discuss your prognosis. They can provide you the information you feel would be most important for you to prepare for your future.

How much do you want to know?

Deciding how much you want to know about the cancer and its treatment is the first step in being able to talk comfortably with your doctor. Some patients desire more information, while others prefer less.

- Tell your health care team your preferences for receiving information about your prognosis and chance of recovery or recurrence
- Ask if there is a learning resource center available or see education resources below.
- Don't be afraid to tell your doctor how much or how little you want to learn.

Some people want to know:

- statistics and chances of surviving or may search for this information on their own.
- want to talk about the future in terms of possibilities of making it to a special date or event
- if the cancer is curable or will treatment slow the cancer and prolong your life, even if it does not disappear completely.
- It is up to you to decide how much information you want.

Some factors that affect prognosis include:

- The type of cancer and where it is in your body
- The stage of the cancer, which refers to the size of the cancer and if it has spread to other parts of your body
- The cancer's grade, which refers to how abnormal the cancer cells look under a microscope. Grade provides clues about how quickly the cancer is likely to grow and spread
- Certain traits of the cancer cells
- Your age and how healthy you were before cancer
- How you respond to treatment

Content adapted from websites below.

Resources for Additional Information:

- [NCCN, What is Cancer?](#)
- [NCCN, Understanding a Diagnosis](#)
- [NIH, Understanding Cancer Prognosis](#)
- [NIH, Understanding Cancer](#)
- [NIH, Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Your Diagnosis](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Cancer Facts and Statistics](#)
- [American Cancer Society, 24/7 questions about cancer or need help finding resources, 800-227-2345](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Understanding Statistics Used to Guide Prognosis and Evaluate Treatment](#)

Recursos en Español:

- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, El pronóstico del cáncer](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, El pronóstico del cáncer - video](#)