

When you have cancer

Other questions

What difference will this treatment make to my quality of life?

Should I follow a special diet?

Will treatment affect my fertility?

Can I work? Can I have sex? Can I travel?

Can I drink alcohol?

What can I do to help my treatment?

What if this treatment does not work?

How much will the treatment cost?

Where can I go for support for myself and/or my family?

Waiting and watching

Sometimes treatment is not arranged immediately, and the doctor recommends waiting and watching your health.

Questions you could ask at this time are:

What changes should I look for?

Who should I contact if I notice any changes or become unwell?

The Cancer Society

Local Cancer Societies offer information and a range of support services for people with cancer and their families.

The Cancer Information Service is a telephone service staffed by specially trained nurses.

Telephone 0800 800 426.

Cancer Society of New Zealand Inc.

National Office

PO Box 10 847, Wellington
Telephone: (04) 494-7270

Auckland Division

PO Box 1724, Auckland
Telephone: (09) 308-0160
Covering: Northland

Waikato/Bay of Plenty Division

PO Box 134, Hamilton
Telephone: (07) 838-2027
Covering: Tauranga, Rotorua

Central Districts Division

PO Box 5096, Palmerston North
Telephone: (06) 364-8989
Covering: Taranaki, Wanganui,
Manawatu, Hawkes Bay and Gisborne/East Coast

Wellington Division

52 Riddiford Street, Wellington
Telephone: (04) 389-8421
Covering: Marlborough, Nelson,
Wairarapa and Wellington

Canterbury/West Coast Division

PO Box 13450, Christchurch
Telephone: (03) 379-5835
Covering: South Canterbury,
West Coast, Ashburton

Otago/Southland Division

PO Box 6258, Dunedin
Telephone: (03) 477-7447

Cancer Information Service 0800 800 426

www.cancernz.org.nz

We would appreciate your support

The Cancer Society receives no direct financial support from Government so funding comes only from donations, legacies and bequests.

You can make a donation by phoning 0900 31 111, through our website at www.cancernz.org.nz or by contacting your local Cancer Society



Living with Cancer

When you have cancer *Inā ka pāngia koe e te mate pukupuku*



Questions to ask your doctor

You and your doctors

When you have a diagnosis of cancer, you will probably see more than one doctor or specialist. It is important for you to talk to them and be able to ask questions to make sure your needs are met. This leaflet will help you obtain the information you need.

Ask yourself how much detail you want to know. You may want just an overview. Or, you may want a more thorough explanation. For most people knowing exactly what is happening helps them feel better and more in control.

Cancer is many different diseases and each person is different. Only the doctors treating you can give you information that applies to you.

Public or private treatment?

Some treatments (but not all) are available in both the public and private systems. You can therefore choose which would best suit your needs. If you need urgent treatment, generally you will not have to wait long at a public hospital.

Seeing a doctor

Before seeing a doctor, write down the questions you would like to ask. No question is too small or silly. Take care to write down the answers or use a tape recorder.

You may want to take a relative or friend as a support person. They can help you listen to answers and remind you if you've forgotten a question. If you have difficulty speaking or understanding English, ask for, or take an interpreter.

If you don't understand the answers, ask the doctor to explain again.

If you or the doctor is in a hurry, ask if you can make an appointment for a more suitable time.

General questions

Some of the general questions you might ask are:

What is cancer?

What is the name of my cancer?

Is it slow or fast growing?

Which parts of my body are affected? (ask the doctor to draw a diagram or show you a picture)

Is it possible to completely cure my cancer?

About tests

You may have tests before, during and after treatment. Some will confirm what sort of cancer you have and whether it has spread. This is called staging.

Questions you might ask are:

Why are you doing this test?

What will the test involve?

Will it be painful?

What will the results tell us?

How accurate is the test?

What are the risks of the test to me?

Will the results of the test make any difference to the treatment I get?

What are the results of the tests I have had already?

Will I be charged?

Your treatment

Your treatment will depend on the type and size of the cancer and whether it has spread to other parts of your body. It will also depend on your age and your general health. Sometimes one method of treatment is used alone, and other times a combination is used.

Questions you might ask are:

What treatments are available for my type of cancer?

What is the aim of each treatment:

- for cure?
- for temporary control?
- to reduce symptoms?

Will I receive treatment as an out-patient or be admitted to hospital?

How will my treatment be given?

How long will my treatment take? What is the timetable or plan?

How does the treatment work?

What are the chances that the treatment will work?

What will happen if I have no treatment?

How long will it be before I know if the treatment is working?

How do I tell if the treatment is working?

What are the possible side effects? Can they be prevented or controlled? Are they temporary or permanent?

Is there a clinical trial I can take part in?