

Patient information from BMJ

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Pancreas cancer: questions to ask your doctor

Being diagnosed with a serious illness such as pancreas cancer can be a shock. You may find it hard to think of everything you want to ask your doctor.

It might help to make a list of questions before your appointment. You could also take notes during your visit, or bring a close friend or relative with you to ask questions and jot down information.

Here are some questions you may want to ask.

General questions

- How advanced is my disease? What is the stage of my cancer?
- Has my cancer spread?
- Do I need more tests to check if it has spread?
- What treatment choices do I have?
- Can you operate?
- Will you be able to help with my symptoms (such as pain)?
- What assistance or support can I get to help me cope?
- Can I get help with my diet and exercise?

Questions about surgery

- Why do you think I should (or shouldn't) have surgery?
- Will surgery mean I live longer?
- What kind of operation do you recommend?
- What are the risks of surgery?
- Where would I go to have surgery? Is it a specialist center?
- How will I feel after the operation?
- Will it be painful afterward? And how can this be treated?

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- Will I need to change my diet?
- How long will I be in the hospital?
- When will I get back to my normal activities?

Questions about medications and other treatments

- What treatments do you recommend?
- Why do I need these treatments? What are the benefits?
- Will they help me live longer or will they just help my symptoms?
- What are the side effects of these treatments?
- Can the side effects be treated?
- How should I expect to feel during treatment?
- How will treatment affect my normal activities?
- How long will treatment go on?
- Will I need to be treated in a hospital or can I have treatment as an outpatient?
- How will I know if the treatment is working?
- Are there any clinical trials I could join?

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