

## **Newly Diagnosed Patients: A list of questions to ask your doctor**

Communication is important throughout cancer care. If you learn that you have advanced cancer, you will have choices to make about your care and what steps you need to take. For many, it's hard to ask questions about what these steps should be. Some patients with advanced cancer benefit from active treatment, while others do not. Everyone's cancer is unique to them and their personal situation.

Whether you've just been diagnosed, or the standard treatment isn't working, it's important to ask your health care team what to expect in the future. Studies show that patients who have these discussions with their doctor have a better quality of life than those who don't. You can hope for the best while still being informed about your choices. The more information you have, the better decisions you and your loved ones can make about how you want to move forward with your care.

It is important for you to have honest, open discussions with your cancer care team. They are there to answer all your questions, no matter how trivial you might think they are. We have assembled this comprehensive list of questions to ask your doctor. Some of these may be putting the cart before the horse, but all are questions that should be considered to help you BEAT ovarian cancer as successfully as possible. Being an informed patient with a positive attitude is very important, too! When you meet with your doctor, consider asking some of the following questions:

### **General questions about your cancer and your healthcare team**

1. Where did this cancer start?
2. Has my ovarian cancer spread?
3. How serious is my cancer?
4. What is my expected prognosis?
5. Why do you suspect that I have this type of cancer?
6. What type of ovarian cancer, fallopian tube cancer or peritoneal cancer do I have?
7. Can you explain my pathology report (laboratory test results) to me?
8. What is the stage and grade of my cancer? What does this mean?
9. How common is this type and stage of ovarian cancer?
10. About how many patients with this condition have you treated?
11. Who will be part of my health care team, and what does each member do?
12. Who will coordinate my overall treatment and follow-up care? What will happen to my cancer without treatment?
13. What will happen to my cancer without treatment?
14. Is there anything else I should be asking or need to know?
15. **Next Appointment:**

Doctor:

Date:

Time:

### **Questions about additional testing, if prescribed**

16. What kinds of diagnostic tests will be performed to determine the type and stage of my ovarian cancer?
17. Will ovarian cancer tests include physical examinations, imaging tests, laboratory tests, and/or biopsy? If so, what do these tests involve?
18. How should I prepare for these diagnostic tests?
19. Will any of these diagnostic tests be painful or require anesthesia? If so, what type of anesthesia will be used and how will my pain be controlled during and after the procedure?
20. What are the benefits, risks, and possible complications associated with these diagnostic tests?
21. When can I return to my normal activities following these procedures?
22. How long will it take to get the results of these tests?
23. Who will discuss these results with me?
24. Will someone contact me, or should I call for the test results?

**Telephone number to call:**

**Date to call:**

### **Questions about surgery**

25. What type of surgery will I have? Will lymph nodes be removed?
26. Is surgery an option for me? If so, what kind of surgery do you suggest?
27. How long will the operation take?
28. How long will I stay in the hospital?
29. If I have pain, how will it be controlled?
30. Do I have to have both of my ovaries removed? If so, will I have hot flashes?
31. If it is recommended that I have a partial or total hysterectomy, how long will I be in the hospital? How long is the recovery period?
32. What can I do to improve my rate of recovery?
33. Can you describe what my recovery from surgery will be like?
34. What are the possible long-term effects of having this surgery?
35. How confident are you that all the cancer has been removed?
36. How many surgeries of this type have you done?
37. Will surgery be done laparoscopically or with a morcellator?

### **General questions about chemotherapy treatments**

38. What are the ways to treat my type and stage of cancer?
39. What are the benefits and risks of each of these treatments?
40. What is the goal of each treatment? Is it to eliminate the cancer, help me feel better, or both?
41. Which chemotherapy drugs do you recommend? Do I have any other treatment options?
42. Why do you think it is best for me?
43. What is my chance of recovery with this treatment?
44. How will we know if the treatment is working?
45. When will I need to start treatment?

46. Where will I go for treatment?
  47. How is the treatment given?
  48. How long will each treatment session take?
  49. How many treatment sessions will I have?
  50. Should a family member or friend come with me to my treatment sessions?
  51. Will I need to be in the hospital for treatment? If so, for how long?
  52. What are the possible side effects of each treatment, in the short term and the long term?
  53. Are there ways to minimize these side effects?
  54. What should I do to be ready for treatment?
  55. How can I keep myself as healthy as possible during treatment?
  56. Should I follow a special diet?
  57. How will this treatment affect my daily life? Will I be able to work, exercise, and perform my usual activities?
  58. Will I lose my hair?
  59. Could this treatment affect my ability to become pregnant or bear a child in the future? If so, should I talk with a fertility specialist before cancer treatment begins?
  60. Could this treatment affect my sex life? If so, how and for how long?
  61. Do I need to tell you about the medicines I am taking now?
  62. Should I tell you about dietary supplements (such as vitamins, minerals, herbs, or fish oil) that I am taking?
  63. Could any drugs or supplements change the way that cancer treatment works?
  64. Will I need any additional surgery?
  65. What are the possible side effects of during and after treatment?
  66. Are there any side effects that I should call you about right away?
  67. Are there any lasting effects of the treatment?
  68. Will this treatment affect my ability to have children?
  69. How can I prevent or manage side effects?
  70. How will my condition be monitored during treatment? How will we know if the treatment is working?
  71. Can I continue my normal activities during ovarian cancer treatment?
  72. Whom should I call for questions or problems that arise during treatment?
- Telephone number to call:**

### **Questions about clinical trials**

73. Do you recommend that I participate in an ovarian cancer clinical trial? Why or why not?
74. How do I find out about studies for my type and stage of cancer?
75. What clinical trials are available to me?
76. Where are they located, and how do I find out more about them?
77. What is the purpose of the trial?
78. Why do the researchers believe that the treatment being studied may be better than the one being used now? Why may it not be better?
79. How long will I be in the trial?
80. What kinds of tests and treatments are involved?
81. How will the doctor know if the treatment is working?
82. How will I be told about the trial's results?

83. How long do I have to make up my mind about joining this trial?
84. Who will oversee my care?
85. Who can I speak with about questions I have during and after the trial?
86. Is there someone I can talk to who has been in the trial?
87. Is it a blind trial where I may be given a placebo?

### **Questions to ask if you participate in a clinical trial**

88. What are the possible side effects or risks of the new treatment?
89. What are the possible benefits?
90. How do the possible risks and benefits of this trial compare to those of the standard treatment?
91. How will my health information be kept private?
92. What happens if I decide to leave the trial?
93. Will I have to pay for any of the treatments or tests?
94. What costs will my health insurance cover?
95. Who pays if I'm injured in the trial?
96. Who can help answer any questions from my insurance company?
97. How could the trial affect my daily life?
98. How often will I have to come to the hospital or clinic?
99. Will I have to stay in the hospital during the clinical trial? If so, how often and for how long?
100. Will I have to travel long distances?
101. Will I have check-ups after the trial?
102. What are my other treatment choices, including standard treatments?
103. How does the treatment I would receive in this trial compare with the other treatment choices?

### **Questions about Survivorship**

104. What is the chance that the cancer will come back? Should I watch for specific signs or symptoms?
105. How will my condition be monitored after treatment? What types of tests will be performed?
106. What steps can I take to prevent the cancer from recurring?
107. How often will I have follow-up examinations after treatment?
108. How do I get a treatment summary and survivorship care plan to keep in my personal records?
109. Why are ovarian cancer, fallopian tube cancer, and peritoneal cancer called "chronic diseases"?
110. Should other women in my family be tested regularly for this type of cancer?
111. Should I be tested for the BRCA mutations? What should I do if the test is positive?
112. Should other women in my family be tested for the BRCA gene?
113. What follow-up tests will I need, and how often will I need them?
114. What do I tell my children, husband, parents, and other family members?
115. What survivorship support services are available to me? To my family?
116. If I'm worried about managing the costs of cancer care, who can help me?
117. What support services are available to me? To my family?

## **Questions for advanced cancer patients**

Asking these questions may help you decide whether to continue or to begin active treatment. Tell your health care team exactly what you want to know, and how much you can take in. If possible, it's best to involve your loved ones in this process. It will help you figure out your needs and the needs of others close to you.

118. What does “advanced cancer” mean for me?
119. How long can I live with my advanced cancer?
120. Are there tests I should have now to better understand the extent of my cancer?
121. What’s the best we can hope for by trying another treatment? What’s the goal?
122. What are my treatment choices? Which do you recommend for me and why?
123. Is this treatment plan meant to help side effects, slow the growth of my cancer, or both?
124. Is there a chance that a new treatment will be found while we try the old one?
125. Would a clinical trial be right for me?
126. What kind of care will I receive to keep me comfortable if I decide not to have active treatment for my cancer?
127. What are the possible side effects and other downsides of my treatment? How likely are they?
128. How can I manage the symptoms of my advanced cancer or the side effects of its treatment?
129. Can you refer me to a palliative care specialist to help me cope with my side effects?
130. How do I decide whether to continue or stop cancer treatment?
131. When should I consider having hospice care?
132. How can I make sure I have the best quality of life possible – that I am comfortable and free of pain?
133. Can I have hospice care in my home, or do I have to go to a special facility?
134. How can I get help with financial and legal issues (for example, paying for hospice care or preparing a will or an advance directive)?
135. How can I get help with my spiritual needs?

Use this space for other questions you may want to ask.

***We hope this guide has helped! If you have any questions, please call the NormaLeah Office at 309.794.0009 and we would be happy to help you sort out your options. Be well!***