PATIENT INFORMATION

Preparing for your first appointment

A cancer diagnosis can leave you with more questions than answers. You do not need to work everything out before speaking with us. Find support for you and those caring for you, and prepare for the next step.

Before your first appointment

Bring the records you already have, arranged by date if possible. This checklist can help:

- **Your reports:** biopsy and pathology reports, which describe findings from examining samples of tissue or cells; recent blood test results; and any molecular or genetic reports, which may describe gene changes or other features relevant to care.
- **Your scans:** a CD containing the scan images in Digital Imaging and Communications in Medicine (DICOM) format and viewing software, together with written scan reports. DICOM is a standard format used for medical images.
- **Your treatment and medicines:** summaries of previous surgery, radiation and medicine treatment; a current medicine list with doses, supplements and any allergies.
- **Your questions:** the concerns you most want to discuss, written down or saved on your phone.

If some records are missing or results are still awaited, you can still contact our team for guidance. Let us know what you have, and we can help you work out what to gather before the visit.

It would be preferable if you could bring a family member or caregiver to support you. Tell us beforehand about any specific travel, mobility or communication needs, including language support or interpretation. Ask what arrangements are available at your chosen centre.

You can also explore care, costs and support.

What happens at the first consultation?

Your doctor reviews the diagnosis, test results and stage, which describes the extent of cancer in the body. Further tests are considered when needed to clarify the situation or plan care.

Tell us how you are managing day to day and what matters to you, including other health conditions, work, sleep, family responsibilities or travelling for appointments. These concerns belong in the discussion.

Your doctor explains suitable options, the goal of treatment, and the possible benefits and risks. You can ask for simpler words, a pause or an explanation again. Taking notes or bringing someone to help you remember can be useful.

Questions to help you leave with a clearer plan

- What do we know so far, and what are we still waiting to find out?
- What is the next step, and when does it need to happen?
- Which decisions need to be made now, and which can wait?
- Whom should I contact with questions, and what should I do if I become unwell?
- Understand the different cancer treatments

If you feel overwhelmed

You do not have to appear positive all the time. You might begin with “I am frightened about what happens next”, “I heard the explanation, but I could not take it all in”, or “I don’t understand why this is happening to me, or what to do next.”

Questions about eating, body changes, intimacy, work or family life are part of cancer care too. If worry is affecting sleep or making everyday life difficult, tell your care team and ask what support can be arranged.

Focus your reading on your diagnosis and the next decision. You do not need to read every possible treatment or complication at once. Bring anything confusing to your consultation.

Explore help with everyday concerns

I am supporting someone with cancer

A caregiver may be a partner, relative or friend helping with appointments or day-to-day care. You may be organising everything while feeling worried yourself. Your questions and support needs matter too.

Ask the person what help they would find useful. You do not need every medical answer to be supportive.

- Help keep reports, medicines, questions and appointment details together.
- Listen to what matters to the person and help them raise it during the consultation.
- If you will be helping with care at home, ask the team to explain and demonstrate what is needed, and whom to contact for help.

Let the team know if the practical or emotional load is becoming difficult. Ask what help is available, and share tasks with others where possible.