

GENERAL QUESTIONS FOR YOUR DOCTOR OR NURSE

1. **You can** bring members of your family or a friend to talk to the doctor or nurse directly.
2. Where can I find more information about breast cancer?
3. Can you refer me to a breast cancer support group or counselor?
4. Is there a multi-disciplinary breast cancer team in the facility where you practice?
5. Can you give me an overview of your or your colleagues' experience in dealing with breast cancer?
6. Do I need to be on a nutritional program? Are there other things I can do that would benefit me in conjunction with traditional medicine? (Example: supplements, exercise, meditation, etc.)
7. Do I need to see a gynecologist more often during my treatments or after my treatments are over with? What about if I'm taking tamoxifen?
8. If my surgeon and oncologist are at different institutions, will it be more difficult for them to communicate about my care?
9. What is lymphedema? Will I be at risk for getting lymphedema?
10. What are clinical trials? Am I a candidate for any current clinical trials?
11. What can I do about feeling excessively tired during my treatments? How can I learn to sleep or relax?
12. Will I lose interest in intimate relations with my partner during the treatments?
13. May I consume alcohol in any amount while I'm being treated?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR SURGEON

1. Do I have an option between a lumpectomy and a mastectomy? Which one of these procedures is best for my breast cancer diagnosis? Can a lumpectomy be done on an outpatient basis?
2. How much breast tissue will be removed? What will the scar look like?
3. Is a Sentinel Lymph Node Biopsy an option for me? Can you explain the procedure and what it will tell us about my breast cancer?
4. If a mastectomy is performed, what are my choices for reconstruction? Can the reconstruction be performed during the same surgery as the mastectomy?
5. How much pain will I have after the procedure? What can I do to alleviate the pain?
6. How long will I be in the hospital after the surgery?
7. When will the surgery drains be removed? Is it painful to take them out?
8. Will I need to make arrangements for someone to help me with daily activities when I come home from the hospital?
9. How long before I can go back to work, an exercise program, or leisure activities?
10. How will I look after a mastectomy if I don't have my breast reconstructed? Can you show me pictures?
11. What is your opinion on prophylactic mastectomies? Is that something I should consider?
12. After my course of treatment is over, how often should I have a mammogram?
13. Does a mastectomy decrease the chances of the cancer coming back?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR PLASTIC SURGEON

1. What type of reconstruction is best for me? What are the benefits and disadvantages of each?
2. Will an implant make it more difficult to detect a local recurrence?
3. Will I need reconstruction on my other breast for symmetry?
4. Is there any topical treatment I can use to reduce the appearance of surgery scars?
5. Will the implant or tissue stay in place, or will I need further surgeries after a number of years?
6. How will my breast look after the surgery? Can you show me pictures?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR ONCOLOGIST

1. Can you explain the benefits and risks of chemotherapy? If I'm lymph node negative, why might I need chemotherapy?
2. What type of chemotherapy will I be receiving and for how long? How successful is this treatment for the type of cancer I have?
3. How will the effectiveness of the chemotherapy be evaluated?
4. How often will I come in for treatment, and how long does each session take?
5. What is a port, and will I need to have one for my chemotherapy?
6. Do I need someone to accompany me to chemotherapy sessions? Can I use public transportation to come home after the treatments?
7. What side effects will I experience, and will I be given medications to treat them? (Such as for nausea, mouth sores.)
8. Should I have something to eat before my treatments? Can I take vitamins or herbs during the time I'm on chemotherapy?
9. Can I eat out in restaurants while I'm on chemotherapy? If so, what foods should I avoid?
10. Do I need to prepare my food in a special way? Are there certain foods that will help me tolerate chemotherapy better than others?
11. Will I be able to go to work while I'm on chemotherapy?
12. Will I lose my hair, eyebrows, or eyelashes? When will they come out? How long will it take to grow back after my chemotherapy is finished?
13. Can I take vacations or travel by airplane between treatments? Can I go to public events such as movies, theater, sporting events?
14. Can you have dental problems after chemotherapy?
15. Is it harmful to my overall cancer treatment if I have to miss a chemotherapy session due to low blood counts?
16. Does chemotherapy affect a woman's hormones? Will I continue to have my menstrual periods? Will I still be able to conceive a child after treatment? Should I use birth control during my treatment?
17. Is high-dose chemotherapy an option for me? What are the current studies as to its benefits and risks?
18. Did the tests on my tumor show it to be estrogen receptor positive or progesterone receptor positive? What does that mean in regard to my treatment?
19. Will I be taking tamoxifen after my chemotherapy is done? What are the side effects of tamoxifen? How long will I be taking it?
20. Am I a candidate for an aromatase inhibitor? If so, which one would you recommend? What does the latest research show about their effectiveness and side effects?
21. Will I have any long-term or permanent side effects or conditions due to the chemotherapy treatment?

QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR RADIATION ONCOLOGIST

1. Why do I need radiation therapy? How do you evaluate the effectiveness of the treatment?
If my surgery resulted in clear margins, do I still need radiation therapy?
2. Can I continue with work or my exercise schedule during the treatments?
3. How often will I go for treatments? Can I miss a few treatments?
4. Is it possible to be treated at another hospital if I'm traveling?
5. What are the possible side effects of radiation therapy? Which side effects should I report immediately?
6. Can I expose the treated skin to the sun?
7. Can I use topical ointments to relieve the skin irritation? What are the best ones?
8. Will the radiation encourage lymphedema, and is there anything I can do to prevent it?
9. Will I be able to conceive a child after the treatments?
10. Will the radiation therapy produce any long-term or permanent damage to the skin or other areas of my body?

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