

When you see your surgeon today you may have questions and concerns. Often these are forgotten in the heat of the moment, only to be remembered later. We have compiled a list of questions to help you to get the information you want from your surgeon about your illness, and possible treatments.

These questions have been developed after discussion with many people. Your surgeon is keen to answer any questions you may have, either now or at future consultations. You and your family may choose to use this list at any time.

We suggest you tick the questions that you want to ask and write down any that you may think of which are not listed. In many cases, your surgeon will have answered the questions without you even asking, and in that instance this pamphlet can serve as a checklist.

HOW AND WHEN TO ASK QUESTIONS

- Do you have time today to discuss my questions?
- Can I ask you to explain any words that I am not familiar with?

DIAGNOSIS

- What kind of cancer do I have?
- Where is the cancer at the moment? Has it spread to other parts of my body?
- How common is my cancer?

TESTS

- Are there any further tests that I need to have? What will they tell us? Will they confirm my diagnosis?
- What will I experience when having the test/s?

PROGNOSIS

- How bad is this cancer and what is it going to mean for me?
- How likely is it that the cancer will spread to other parts of my body?
- What is the aim of surgery? To cure the cancer or to control it and manage symptoms?



- What is the expected survival for people with my type of cancer?
- Is the surgery going to improve my chance of survival?
- What is the best case scenario? What is the worst case scenario?

OPTIMAL CARE

- Do you specialise in treating my type of cancer?
- How often have you done this type of surgery?
- How well established is this surgery?
- Are there guidelines on how to treat my cancer?

THE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAM

- Do you work in a multi-disciplinary team and what does this mean?
- Can you explain the advantages of a team approach?
- How do you all communicate with each other and me?
- Will you be in charge of my care?
- What do I do if I get conflicting information?

TREATMENT INFORMATION AND OPTIONS

Options

- Is surgery absolutely necessary?
- Do I have a choice of treatments?
- How much time do I have to think about this? Do you need my decision today?
- Are there any advantages/disadvantages in having my surgery here?
- Are there any advantages or disadvantages of using the private versus public health system?
- Can I have the surgery earlier if I pay for it?
- What is your opinion about the best treatment for me?

Surgery

- Could plans to operate on me change? Why?
- Will it be you doing the surgery?
- When will I meet the anaesthetist?
- Will I require a blood transfusion?
- Is there anything specific I need to bring to the hospital?
- Is there anything I can do before or after surgery to assist my recovery?

Effects of the Surgery

- What effects should I expect after the surgery? When are these likely to happen?
- How long do you expect me to be in hospital and what would change that?
- What problems should I look out for when I go home and who do I contact if they occur?
- Is there any written information that I can take home about my after-care?
- What are the dos and don'ts in after-care?
- What can I expect from the operation long-term, e.g. exercise, diet, work, sexuality, etc?
- Will I need any additional treatment after the surgery? If so, what might that be?

Costs

- What will be the costs throughout my treatment, e.g. medication, operation costs?
- Am I eligible for any benefits if I cannot work?

Support Information

- What information is available about my cancer and the surgery, e.g. books, videos, websites, etc?
- Are there any complementary therapies that you believe may be helpful or that are known to be bad for me?
- Is there someone I can talk to who has been through this surgery?
- Are there services /support groups that can help me and my family deal with this illness?