



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Bone Cancer

Bone cancer can be a challenging issue to treat, but understanding the condition is an important first step to taking control of its symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation with a doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Tumor	An abnormal growth of cells within the body. Growth of tumor cells can be destructive to the tissues surrounding the tumor. Some tumors have the ability to spread throughout the body, while others stay in one location.
Malignancy	An abnormal growth of cells that are cancerous, meaning that they have the potential to spread throughout the body and to other organs. Malignant tumors typically require treatment that may include surgery, chemotherapy, and radiation.
Benign	An abnormal growth of cells, but these tumors are noncancerous and will not spread throughout your body. Benign tumors can cause problems by weakening the bone, but they are generally not considered life-threatening.
Metastatic	An abnormal growth of cells that has spread from another part of the body. Metastatic tumors that have a tendency to spread to bone include lung cancer, prostate cancer, breast cancer, and others.
Primary	A primary bone tumor develops from bone cells. Unlike malignant tumors, which spread from other parts of the body, primary bone tumors originate within the bone.
Bone Scan	A test used to detect activity within bone cells. A bone scan will show activity around the growth plates and fractures, as well as around many types of bone tumors.
PET Scan	A test used to detect metabolically active tissues within your body. PET scans can measure blood flow, oxygen consumption, and the use of sugars by tissue in your body to detect areas of abnormality.
Pathologic Fracture	A pathologic fracture occurs as a result of bone that has become weak. One cause of bone weakening is a tumor within the bone. When this occurs, the damage to the bone structure can lead to fractures with minimal or no trauma.
Biopsy	A test that obtains a sample of tissue from an area of concern to evaluate the source of a problem. Biopsies are commonly obtained in the setting of bone tumors to evaluate the source of the tumor and how aggressive a tumor looks.
Limb-Salvage	Surgery that is performed to remove bone cancers and reconstruct the extremity, often with the use of artificial implants. Limb salvage is an alternative to amputation for some types of bone cancers.

