

DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Pancreatic Cancer

Being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer can feel intimidating, but you and your doctor will work together to help take control of your symptoms. Asking the right questions during your conversation 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.

Ascites	An abnormal collection of fluid in the belly which feels and looks like bloating.
Adenocarcinoma	A common form of cancer found in pancreatic cells.
Biopsy	A test that examines tissue or other specimen samples to look for cancer cells.
Endoscopic Ultrasound	A type of test to look at the pancreas, usually with a small camera attached to a scope. The procedure is minimally-invasive but patients are sedated.
Jaundice	A yellow tinge to the skin and whites of the eyes that happens when there is too much bilirubin (part of what makes bile) in the blood.
Gemcitabine (Gemzar)	A commonly used type of chemotherapy drug to treat pancreatic cancer.
Metastases	When cancer cells spread from the origin site to other places in the body.
Steatorrhea	Foul-smelling, floating, oily, sticky diarrhea caused by fat malabsorption. People who have problems with their pancreas often have this kind of stool.
Pancreatic Exocrine Tumors	The most common type of tumor in people with pancreatic cancer.
Pancreatectomy	Surgery to remove the pancreas (or only a part of it).
Prognosis	A doctor's prediction of how a patient's cancer will progress.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage your cancer.

About Symptoms

- Does pancreatic cancer have symptoms? What are they?
- I haven't experienced any symptoms, how can I have cancer?
- Are there symptoms that indicate I should go to the ER or call your office?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- What causes pancreatic cancer?
- Is pancreatic cancer related to diabetes?

About Diagnosis

- What tests do I need to have?
- Are there different types of pancreatic cancer? Which type do I have?
- How is pancreatic cancer graded?
- What grade is my cancer?
- Will the grade change over time or with treatment?
- What should I share with my family, friends, and/or support system about my diagnosis?

About Treatment

- What are the side effects of the medications you prescribed?
- Will I need to have surgery?
- What are the odds the cancer will come back after remission?
- Are there any tests or screenings I will need to have?
