

Metastatic Cancer: questions to ask your treatment team



Below are some questions we suggest you take to your treating doctor to help you understand what is happening or may happen after being given a metastatic diagnosis:

What type, stage and grade of cancer do I have?

Understanding the specific cancer type, its stage and grade will help you grasp the severity of your condition.

What is the extent of my disease?

Ask about the locations and size of metastatic tumours to understand how the cancer has spread.

What treatment options are available for me?

Enquire about the various treatment options, including surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, immunotherapy, targeted therapy, and clinical trials.

Who can I expect to be on my medical team?

With many different people involved in cancer care, it can help to know who to expect to meet.

What are the goals of treatment?

Discuss whether the primary goal of treatment is to control it, alleviate symptoms, or improve your quality of life.

What are the potential side effects of treatment?

Understanding the side effects can help you prepare for and manage them effectively.

What is your recommended treatment plan, and what is the timeline for treatment?

Ask for a detailed treatment plan, including the sequence of treatments and expected timelines (if these are known).

If that treatment stops working, what will happen next?

Being prepared for the future can help prepare you for changes in treatment.



Are there any clinical trials or experimental treatments available for my type of cancer?

Find out about potential opportunities for participation in clinical trials or innovative treatments.

What are my chances of responding to treatment, and what is the expected prognosis?

While no one can predict outcomes with certainty, discussing general expectations can help you plan for the future.

Is there anything I can do to improve my prognosis?

Being aware of any medication contraindications or lifestyle changes you can make can help support you.

What does any new research say about the type of cancer I have?

Understanding up-to-date research will allow you to understand your options better.

Can you explain the potential long-term effects of treatment and their management?

Understanding the long-term effects can help you make informed decisions about your care.

How will treatment impact my daily life, including work, family, and quality of life?

Discuss the practical aspects of managing treatment and its effects on your daily routine.

What supportive care services are available?

Enquire about services such as palliative or supportive care, counselling, nutrition counselling, and pain management to improve your overall well-being.

What lifestyle changes can I make to support my treatment and overall health?

Discuss diet, exercise, and other lifestyle modifications that can complement your treatment plan.

How often will I need medical check-ups and scans?

It will help you understand the schedule for follow-up appointments and monitoring and what will be required during treatment.



If I am willing to self-fund treatment, do I have access to other treatment options?

Knowing you are willing to self-fund can open treatment options that the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme does not fund.

Can I get a second opinion?

If you have doubts or want to explore other treatment options, please ask about the process for seeking a second opinion.

Do you have any written information or resources about my cancer type and treatment options?

Having written materials can be helpful for understanding and sharing information with loved ones.

Who is my point of contact to discuss any concerns, changes in my symptoms or treatment plans?

Many healthcare facilities offer a nurse or similar as the first contact point.

Will I be referred to palliative care services, and at what point would you recommend accessing them?

Palliative care helps to manage your symptoms and provides supportive care.

What support is available for my family and friends during this time?

There are often services to support those going through this experience with you.

The more informed you are, the better you can make decisions for your future and treatment. Don't be afraid to ask questions or seek clarification when something is unclear. This is your metastatic experience, so take these questions as a starting point and ask anything else that is relevant to you.