

# Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Provider

FOR COLORECTAL CANCER PATIENTS ON TREATMENT



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## Tips for Your Next Appointment

To prepare for your next medical appointment(s) and to ensure that it runs smoothly, please consider the following:

- Make a list of your **medical history** (including allergies, medical conditions, previous illnesses and/or surgeries, and relevant family history);
- Make a list of **all the medications** you take;
- Collect and bring all your relevant **medical reports**;
- **Bring a notebook** with you to take notes;
- Consider bringing a **friend or family member** to your appointment;
- Consider the opportunity to ask for an **interpreter** if the appointment is held in a language different from your native one (if needed).

It may be helpful to prepare important questions and aspects that you would like to have clarified during your appointment. Use the following Q&A to prepare your list of questions and identify your concerns. The Q&A is organized around the most important steps of the patient pathway and you can therefore review those that are most relevant to you.

Some questions you may have might be addressed automatically in your appointments, however, be sure to bring any unanswered questions to your next appointment. If you think that some of the following questions were not answered or were not clear, don't hesitate to ask your healthcare team for clarifications.

## Understanding Disease and Treatment Monitoring

You will continue to be monitored once you have started your treatment. Over time your doctor will monitor how your illness is responding to the treatment. Your monitoring plan will depend on the stage of your cancer at diagnosis and the treatment plan chosen for you. For all treatment plans, you will have regular monitoring to evaluate the cancer's response to the treatment. You will also be monitored for any side effects and a management plan will be tailored to your needs. Your doctor may order a CEA (carcinoembryonic antigen) test for you to monitor your reaction to the cancer treatment. The questions below can support your upcoming conversation with your doctor.

## Possible Questions for a Better Understanding of Disease and Treatment Monitoring

### Is My Treatment Working?

- How will I know if my treatment is working?

### What About Testing During Treatment?

- Will I need to have any further tests?
- What could those tests be?
- What will the CEA determine with respect to my treatment?
- How frequently will my CEA be tested?

### What About My Side Effects?

- What can I do to manage my treatment side effects?
- What happens if I experience severe side effects?
- If my side effects are too severe is there a chance I will need to stop my treatment?

### Where Can I Get Support?

- Where can I find additional information about my treatment options?
- Are there any patient organizations with support groups?
- Where can I find additional information or patient organizations to support me?
- Are there any support groups available in my area where I can speak to other patients like me?

# Glossary

You can find here below a short glossary of terms<sup>1</sup> to help you navigate this resource:

- **Cancer stage:** The extent of a cancer in the body. Staging is usually based on the size of the tumor, whether lymph nodes contain cancer, and whether the cancer has spread from the original site to other parts of the body.
- **CEA (carcinoembryonic antigen):** A protein marker in the blood that may be present with some cancers and other diseases; may be used in some cases of colorectal cancer to monitor response to treatment or disease recurrence.
- **Diagnosis:** The process of identifying a disease, condition, or injury from its signs and symptoms. A health history, physical exam, and tests, such as blood tests, imaging tests, and biopsies, may be used to help make a diagnosis.
- **Diagnostic test:** A type of test used to help diagnose a disease or condition.

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<sup>1</sup> This glossary has been built based on the definitions reported in the following documents: Lungevity Glossary: <https://www.lungevity.org/for-patients-caregivers/helpful-tools/glossary#g>; National Human Genome Research Institute Glossary: <https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/g#glossary>; National Cancer Institute Dictionary of Cancer Terms: <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms/expand/D>; Colorectal Cancer Alliance Glossary: <https://www.ccalliance.org/colorectal-cancer-information/glossary-of-terms>

# Acknowledgements



This resource is the result of the co-creation efforts of the [From Testing to Targeted Treatments \(FT3\) Education & Awareness Working Group](#). FT3 is a global, multi-stakeholder collaborative program with the shared goal to make precision medicine an accessible reality for all patients who could benefit from it.

This resource was co-created by building on existing good practice resources<sup>2</sup>. The content is formulated in the form of an adaptable Q&A builder that incorporates precision medicine elements to support patients in asking the right questions at the right time. The resource is available to any precision medicine champions who wish to adapt it to a specific condition and/or local context. If you wish to receive an editable version of this tool to develop a resource for a given geography and/or condition, please contact [silvia@thesynergist.org](mailto:silvia@thesynergist.org).

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<sup>2</sup> Personalized Medicine Coalition (PMC) [More than a Number: Better health begins with you.](#); Decibio, [Precision Medicine Landscape Map](#); MacMillan Cancer Support, [Ask about your cancer treatment](#); Cancer101, [Questions to Ask My Health Care Team](#); Cancer Support Community, [Cancer Diagnosis? What You Need to Know](#); MacMillan Cancer Support, [Questions to ask your healthcare team](#); American Cancer Society, [After diagnosis: a guide for patients and families](#); American Cancer Society, [Questions to Ask Your Doctor When You Have Cancer](#); Cancer.net, [Mobile application](#)