

The six questions every kidney cancer patient should feel able to ask their doctor

Studies show that doctors and patients making treatment decisions together leads to better outcomes and fewer side effects. To help you take an active role in your treatment decisions, print out this PDF and take it with you to your next appointment.

1 “What are my treatment options and what are their benefits and risks?”

The treatments available to you will depend on your cancer type, its stage and your general health. Ask your doctors which treatment plan they think is best for you, if there are any costs and how many tests and check-ups you'll need along the way.

5 “How will we know if this treatment is working?”

Make sure you understand your overall treatment plan, the goals of each stage and what happens if a treatment isn't working or the side effects outweigh the benefits. Ask also about the risks and benefits of delaying or even not having treatment.

2 “How will this treatment make me feel?”

Slowing or curing your cancer is obviously vital, but so is your quality of life during treatment. Discuss what's important to you – work, travel, fatigue, bowel function, sex life - and ask what you will and won't be able to do during different treatments.

6 “Can I get a second opinion?”

Deciding on your cancer treatment is a big decision and getting a second opinion is not saying you don't trust your doctor. Most clinicians welcome second opinions and can often help you set them up with specialists in different areas.

3 “How much experience do you have with this treatment?”

If a surgeon recommends nephrectomy, it's OK to ask how many he's done. Similarly for other treatment options. A young doctor isn't necessarily bad, nor decades of experience a guarantee of success. But it's a worthwhile conversation to have.

4 “Are there any clinical trials I could be a part of?”

Whether a clinical trial is an option for you will depend on factors including your age, stage and whether there are any suitable trials recruiting in your country. If you are interested in clinical trials, be sure to ask about them and find out more at ikcc.org



Another question you should never be afraid to ask is “Can you explain that again?” Kidney cancer treatments can be complicated, particularly if you've only recently been diagnosed. Take notes, take a trusted friend or family member and make sure you and your doctors always make treatment decisions together. Find out more at ikcc.org/kidney-cancer-decision-aid-my-treatment-my-choice/