

# How to Better Understand Your Cancer Diagnosis or Stage

Online version with active resource links at: <http://cancer-help.me/diagnosis>

## What is cancer?

Cancer is the name given to a group of related diseases. There are more than 100 types of cancer. Cancer can start in most any place in the body. Cancer is when abnormal or damaged cells malfunction and grow uncontrollably. It is important to know the specific type of cancer you have been diagnosed with so you can be informed and have a better understanding of how this will affect your life.

Take an active role in your cancer care by asking questions and using resources available from your care team to help you make decisions.

- What specific type of cancer do I have?
- Where is it located?
- What lifestyle changes—such as diet, exercise, and rest—should I make to be healthy before, during, and after treatment?
- What type of treatments are recommended?
- How will this diagnosis affect my ability to work/go to school?
- Is this type of cancer caused by inherited factors? Are other members of my family at risk?
- Where can I find more information about this type of cancer and its treatment?

Content adapted from websites below.

## Help with understanding

The unfamiliar medical language may be confusing. Ask your care team to explain any medical words you don't understand. Don't be afraid to ask questions or ask for something to be repeated or said in a different way for better understanding.

Consider bringing a family member or friend to your appointments to help listen and take notes. You could also ask for permission to record doctor visits for replay later. Use the [Abridge app](#) for recording & help understanding cancer terms.

## What is cancer staging?

Cancer staging is a process of using different tests and examinations to find out how much cancer there is, where it is located, and then how to best treat it.

- Specialized tests are often used to determine how much the cancer has grown within your body or in tissue removed from your body.
- Imaging tests, pictures of the insides of your body, may also be used for cancer staging. The pictures allow your doctors to see where the cancer has grown and possibly has spread.
- Sometimes other information is needed to determine where and how much cancer is in your body.

Cancer staging is important. It gives the doctor information to be able to choose the best options for your treatment. It also gives information about possible outlook, or prognosis.

The stage of cancer is determined at diagnose and may also be staged again after treatment has started.

## Information online

Additional information may be provided by your cancer care team and can be found online. See below for credible, respected, trustworthy resources. Learning about your specific treatment will help you make informed decisions regarding what matters to you.

## Resources for Additional Information:

- [Cancer.Net, Diagnosing Cancer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Stages of Cancer](#)
- [NIH, Diagnosis and Staging](#)
- [NIH, Questions to Ask Your Doctor about Your Diagnosis](#)
- [American Cancer Society, 24/7 questions about cancer or need help finding resources, 800-227-2345](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Understanding Your Diagnosis](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Cancer Staging](#)

## Recursos en Español:

- [Cancer.Net, Diagnóstico de cáncer](#)
- [Cancer.Net, Estadios del cáncer](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer, Diagnóstico y estadificación](#)
- [NIH, Instituto Nacional Del Cáncer Preguntas para el doctor sobre su diagnóstico](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Directo a la información sobre cáncer](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Cómo comprender su diagnóstico](#)
- [American Cancer Society, Estadificación del cáncer](#)