Article Series Lymphoma

Taking an active role in your lymphoma treatment plan

You must have JavaScript enabled to use this form.

☐ Like (0) Likes

Bookmark

Share

Print

Resize

A A A

After receiving a lymphoma diagnosis, it might be important to maintain an active role in your care team. Your opinion matters, and the treatment plan for your cancer needs to be one you feel comfortable with.

Determining a treatment plan

The treatment that’s suggested for you will depend on the type and stage of your lymphoma, where the lymphoma is in your body, your age, and your overall health. You should feel confident that you are receiving the treatment that’s right for you.

That may mean asking about treatment options your doctor doesn’t mention, voicing your opinion, and being your own advocate.

How to be your own advocate

Being your own advocate means that you are taking an active role in your diagnosis and treatment plan. It means that you are actively taking steps to understand your diagnosis, understand your treatment options, feel comfortable asking questions or seeking second opinions, and ultimately feel like you have a say in your treatment plan.

Don’t hesitate to ask questions

It’s okay to ask as many questions as you need, and don’t be afraid to repeat questions until you are satisfied that you understand the answers. Bringing a friend or family member to your appointments can be helpful to remember everything your doctor tells you. Ask them to take notes so you can focus during the appointment.

Here are some questions to ask your doctor when deciding on a treatment plan

- Have you treated many patients with my type of lymphoma, who were facing similar prognosis and options?
- What are my treatment options?
- How effective are they for treating my lymphoma?
- What are the risks or side effects for these treatment options?
- What do you recommend, and why?
- What’s my outlook for survival?
- What are the chances of the lymphoma coming back with these treatment plans?
- What would we do if the treatment doesn’t work or if the lymphoma comes back?
- How soon do I need to start treatment?
- Should I get a second opinion before starting treatment? Can you suggest a doctor or cancer center?
- What should I do to get ready for treatment?
- How long will treatment last? What will it be like? Where will it be done?
- How might treatment affect my daily activities?

Do your own research

Learning everything you can about your lymphoma can be helpful and make you feel more in control of your cancer, but it’s important to consider the source of your research. Websites that end in .edu, .org, or .gov are typically more reputable. Print or save articles that you’d like to discuss with your care team. There are some excellent .com sites as well—your healthcare team can help you distinguish what is reliable and what is misinformation.

Get a second opinion

It’s okay to ask for a second opinion, in fact, many doctors welcome the idea and can offer the names of other doctors to talk to. Cancer care is advancing all the time—it is challenging to have one doctor who will know everything. Lymphoma has more than 70 subtypes, so it may be important to find an oncologist or hematologist (blood doctor) that specializes in lymphoma.

Not every clinic or cancer center offers every type of treatment available. You may need to change medical centers to get the care you need.

In the end, if your second opinion doctor recommends the same treatment as the first, it will be worth it to feel confident in your treatment plan.

Connect with the cancer community

Joining a lymphoma support group can help you learn about your diagnosis and what to expect during treatment. Plus, some research shows that joining a support group improves both quality of life and survival.

Support groups may be in person or online. Use these links to find a support group that may be helpful at this time:

- CancerCare®
- Leukemia & Lymphoma Society®
- Lymphoma Support Network