

Treatment Decisions - Toolkit

With the number of new treatment options and more access to clinical trials now available, it is natural to feel a little lost when treatment decisions are needed, but this is a very important time to think about your treatment goals.

To help you manage your treatment decisions, we collected tips and advice from other Belongers on the factors considered together with the medical team when making treatment choices.

It is important to note that treatment recommendations are very individual and may vary from patients to patient.

Locate yourself in the process by considering your personal goals and situation. Some people prefer to be part of the decision process, while others are content to allow the medical team to make the decisions. Both are acceptable.

To begin the medical team, your family members and you may consider:

- ❖ Your overall health, current medical condition, and other medical issues (if any)
- ❖ Your personal situation, family, and work, financial.
- ❖ Your age.
- ❖ Understand the potential benefits and realistic expectations of the treatment goals.
For example, is the treatment goal to cure or to extend survival, reduce symptoms, or improve life quality.
- ❖ Available resources and support network.

Special Tip: Keep in mind that you may feel overwhelmed at the time of a new diagnosis. You may feel different after you complete your initial treatment. Try to stay focused on the now and take things in small steps rather than trying to make all the decisions at once.

Before making the final decision. Questions you might want to ask the medical team:

- ❖ What are the treatment options, what is the standard treatment for this diagnosis and why is the particular treatment being recommended?
- ❖ What are the potential benefits and risks?
- ❖ What is the timeline and duration for this treatment?
- ❖ How will the treatment be given?
- ❖ Could a clinical trial be an option?
- ❖ Consider the distance from your home and the treatment facility.
- ❖ Is the treatment given in the hospital or as an outpatient?
- ❖ What are the possible side effects?
- ❖ At what point do the side effects typically begin?
- ❖ Will the side effects go away once the treatment is over? Ask questions about the possible

side effects, how the side effects are managed and think about how to balance your life with those side effects.

- ❖ How are the side effects managed?
- ❖ What is the best way to communicate with the medical team between appointments?

For you:

- ❖ Discuss what is important to you with the treatment team.
- ❖ Share your wants and needs with your family and friends.
- ❖ Talk to people who have the same kind of cancer and to other Belongers within the Belong communities to help you get their perspective and support.
- ❖ Obtain a copy of the medical records for personal files and a copy of the treatment plan keep it filed within the Belong Files area.
- ❖ Prepare for the meeting with the healthcare team ahead of time. Have your questions ready before each visit.
- ❖ Check you have answers to all the questions and comments that are most important to you.
- ❖ Find out if the treatment center has an oncology social worker or navigator to help you with treatment decisions. Do not be shy to ask the health care team members to help you plan for your treatment dates and follow-up appointments. Update your appointments in the Belong treatment area.
- ❖ You may want to seek a second opinion. Most doctors will support you in the process.
- ❖ Having a good support system is very important. If possible, take a family member, friend, or caregiver with you to your appointments and treatments.

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