

It Matters...

When deciding where to receive your cancer treatment, make sure you are taking the time to pick the best cancer care team for you. Mark the items off this checklist. It is worth it—your first treatment decision is the most important. And rarely will rushing into treatment change the outcome of your therapy for the better. It matters that you educate yourself before starting treatment.



Read the fine print.

Read the fine print in the online bios and reviews of your cancer doctors. You want a cancer doctor who specializes in your kind of cancer. Look for words such as surgical oncologist, radiation oncologist and medical oncologist. You also want to find a doctor that subspecializes in your type of cancer. Find out if they are board certified in oncology. **Do your homework, and read the reviews others have left about the physicians you are considering.**



Experience matters.

Make sure you ask how many times the doctor has done the type of procedure you are having. You will want a physician who has performed a high number of successful procedures. Ask about his/her complication rates and his/her readmission rates. You have a right to know. Doctors should want to share their report card. If you are uncomfortable asking, bring a friend or family member who can ask these questions and can document the answers. The right doctor will not be offended by your need to know.





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Ask for a second opinion.

Ask for a second opinion on your pathology from a reputable cancer pathology expert.

If not at Roswell Park, you can ask to have your pathology read at any National Cancer Institute-designated cancer center in the nation. If your doctor won't do it, you can call the number of the center and ask for a second opinion on your cancer slides. This is very important. **At Roswell Park, our patients have a change in diagnosis between 6% and 14% of the time.** An accurate and detailed diagnosis alters the treatment plan and that first treatment is almost always the most important to the best long-term outcome.

Insist on true comprehensive cancer care.

The words "comprehensive cancer care" have become a marketing slogan. What does it really mean? For places like Roswell Park, designated by the federal government as a Comprehensive Cancer Center, it means we conduct research with a cancer focus and develop new therapies that are impacting cancer survival rates. **We offer the latest therapies, for your particular type of cancer, before they become available elsewhere.** It means we are helping those who are at high risk for cancer to minimize their risks through screening and other preventative tools. Comprehensive cancer care is taking care of the whole person—mind, body and spirit—throughout your treatment and during survivorship, because cancer impacts the entire person and your family.

Ask about their nursing expertise.

When your cancer treatment requires you to stay in a hospital for a certain length of time, you want to make sure that the nursing team taking care of you specializes in oncology nursing. These nurses understand the needs of the cancer patient, and work closely with your entire care team to protect your safety. **With specialized training and experience, they deliver the highest quality care with compassion and are able to minimize discomfort caused by the cancer treatment.** Also, make sure you will be cared for on a hospital floor that is designated for your type of cancer.



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Make sure your doctor is knowledgeable of and can offer all treatment options.

Oftentimes, there are many options available for your type of cancer and even the sequence of the treatments matters. Perhaps surgery will not give you the best chance of survival, or you should have chemo first, before surgery. **You deserve to know all of your treatment options and to have access to each one.** Does the cancer doctor have access to the latest medical treatment? Is he or she using the latest technology? Does he work with a team across medical disciplines to discuss your cancer treatment plan? Ask your doctor how he/she stays up to date on all of the new therapies that are available in cancer. Is he involved in clinical trials? Patients don't always get a second chance if the first treatment is not the right one. Make sure you research all of your options.



Does the doctor follow national guidelines for cancer care? Which ones?

For example, **Roswell Park's doctors and their national colleagues are the authors on the globally accepted National Comprehensive Cancer Network cancer care clinical guidelines.** The doctors at all of our locations, our main campus, our satellites and our community cancer practices, use Roswell Park's pathways for cancer care to monitor the quality of care provided to patients.



Is there a team of all the specialists you need?

Ask if your doctor has a team dedicated to just cancer patients and understands your specific cancer management needs. **Is there a team of all the specialists you need—pathology, diagnostic radiology, medical oncology, surgical oncology, radiation oncology, pharmacy, nursing, pain management, symptom management and supportive care—working together for you on a daily basis?** Can your doctor call for a nutritional consult so that you stay as nourished as possible during your treatment? Does he or she discuss your pre- and post-surgical rehabilitation therapy with a team that understands the issues of your particular type of cancer? **Make sure you are surrounded by a full team that understands your cancer.**

