

Talking With Your Doctor

Your doctor will appreciate an open, honest discussion about treatment, including oral chemotherapy options. A good first conversation can set the tone for an effective, long-term relationship with your doctor. This can help your oncology nurse, doctor, and other team members make your treatment plan the most effective it can be.

Becoming an Active Member of Your Healthcare Team

Talking confidently about all chemotherapy treatment options with your doctor is a chance to show your doctor you are able to take an active role in your own care. You should feel comfortable asking your doctor questions as well as answering any questions he or she may have for you.

If your doctor prescribes oral chemotherapy, you should be in regular communication with your healthcare team to give them timely and full updates on any side effects you may experience. This will help your doctor monitor your treatment and adjust your dosage and medication schedule for maximum effectiveness.

It is important that you understand and follow all instructions and ask follow-up questions if something is not clear. With oral chemotherapy, you play a more active role on your healthcare team.

How to Start the Discussion

Studies show that the quality of doctor-patient communication can affect the outcome of treatment. To get the most out of your discussion about oral chemotherapy, it may help to prepare for it.

If a chemotherapy drug is available in oral form for your cancer, your doctor will want to find out more about your ability to stay on your treatment regimen: following detailed instructions, making regular reports on side effects, and keeping all your scheduled appointments with your doctor and nurse.

Asking questions can show your doctor that you understand what is involved in oral chemotherapy treatment. Don't be afraid to ask questions. You can also prepare a list of what you need to know before your appointment.

If you write down your questions in advance, you may find the answers easier to remember after your doctor's visit. It also helps to prioritize your questions to make sure to get your most important ones answered.

See "Questions to Ask Your Doctor" at the end of this guide for a list of sample questions.



Questions to Ask Your Doctor

Think of your conversation about treatment options as your first chance to take a more active role on your healthcare team. Show you are responsible by learning as much as you can in your discussions with your doctor, and show that you are willing and able to take on added responsibility. Your doctor will be able to provide you with additional information or direct you to informative Websites on the Internet. Take home any brochures or videotapes that will help you better understand your treatment options. If none are offered, ask if any written material may be available.

Sometimes all it takes is the right question to begin an honest and open discussion of all available treatment options. You might ask your doctor, “Is there an oral treatment for my cancer?” or “Is oral chemotherapy right for me?” Here are some questions you might want to ask to start the discussion.

Sample Questions

1. Is oral chemotherapy an option for me?
2. What are the benefits of oral chemotherapy?
3. What are my responsibilities during treatment?
4. How will I maintain contact with you and your staff?
5. How often will I need to come in for check-ups?
6. How should I report side effects to you?
7. How can I monitor my progress?
8. Should I use a diary?
9. Do you have any information I can take with me?

Use this table to discuss treatment options with your doctor:

	Oral Option	Medicine #1	Medicine #2
What treatment choices, oral or intravenous, are available for my kind of cancer?			
Will this treatment allow me to continue my daily activities?			
Will I be able to work? Drive? Travel?			
How often will I receive the treatment?			
How long will the treatment last?			
How and where are these drugs taken?			
What are some of the potential side effects with each of the treatments?			
Can I manage the potential side effects?			
How will this affect my family?			
Will insurance or Medicare cover my treatment?			
Where can I find additional support and resources?			

