

CANCER

The 12 Key Questions You Need to Ask

1. What type of cancer is it and what tissue is it coming from?
2. How big is the cancer? Sometimes a number will be used to express this. T1 ('T' is for tumour) implies a small tumour, T4 is a large tumour.
3. Has it spread outside the primary tissue to anywhere else in the body?
4. Has it spread to the lymph nodes? When cancer spreads, it travels first from the tissues into the lymphatic channels, and then into the nearby lymph nodes – which are small, bean-shaped clusters of cells – then into the bloodstream and beyond into other organs.
5. What stage is the tumour? Staging refers to how far your cancer has spread. The stage is given as a Roman numeral, ranging from stage I (no spread) to stage IV (spread to other organs).
6. What grade is the tumour? The grade represents the speed of aggression with which your cancer is growing – it is usually determined by the appearance under a microscope and is sometimes given a number; 1 is low grade and generally has a better outcome than grade 3, for instance.
7. What is the proposed treatment?
8. Are there other options?
9. Where will this treatment be done?
10. When will I start treatment?
11. What are the chances of the cancer being cured completely?
12. Can I have a copy of the biopsy and the most important imaging reports such as X-rays, CTs or MRIs?