



**Kidney  
Cancer**  
CANADA

## **Questions to ask as you learn more about kidney cancer**

Now that you have been diagnosed with kidney cancer, it is important for you to understand your condition and your treatment options. Many patients find that they do not know which questions to ask. Under the guidance of our Medical Advisory Board, Kidney Cancer Canada has developed the following lists of questions that you may want to select from as you learn more about your diagnosis. We hope that you find these suggestions helpful.

We have included questions you might want to ask when you are first diagnosed with kidney cancer as well as questions you might want to ask when considering various treatment options.

### **Possible sources of answers to your questions**

- Your family physician
- Your oncologist (Medical, Surgical or Radiation)
- Your clinic nurse
- Other members of your healthcare team
- Printed information from the hospital/clinic
- Books; either specifically on kidney cancer or on cancer in general
- The Internet

### **Some general points for you to consider:**

- When visiting your doctor, consider taking a relative or friend along with you. He/she can help you to remember or record the doctor's answers to your questions. An extra set of ears is always useful.
- Take a written list of your questions with you. This will help to guide your conversation with your doctor.
- Write down the answers that the doctor gives to your questions so that you can refer to them later.
- Remember, it is highly unlikely that you will be able to ask all of these questions on the first visit or in any one visit given the large amount of information. You may find it helpful to highlight a few key questions that are the most important for you at your current stage of understanding about the disease.

# QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR KIDNEY CANCER

## 1. Specific questions about your kidney cancer

- What is kidney cancer?
- What kind of kidney cancer do you have?
- Is your cancer a fast- or slow-growing type of cancer?
- Has your cancer spread (metastasized) to other parts of your body?
- What is the stage of your cancer and what does that mean in your case?
- Are there any additional tests that you should have prior to treatment? How long will it take to have all of these tests completed?
- What do you need to do to get ready for these tests?
- When will you get the results of these tests?

## 2. General questions about your kidney cancer

- How will kidney cancer affect your work? Can you continue to work during your treatment? How soon can you return to work after your treatment?
- How will kidney cancer affect your family?
- How do you tell your family and friends about your cancer?
- Should your family members be tested for kidney cancer and if so, what tests should be used?

## 3. Questions to ask about your surgery

- Why do you need this operation?
- What operation is your doctor recommending?
- Is it possible to have a kidney-sparing surgery (partial nephrectomy)? Does your doctor routinely do partial nephrectomies?
- Is it possible for a key hole (laparoscopic) surgery?
- Will you need any lymph nodes removed during the surgery?
- Will you need your adrenal gland removed during the surgery? If so, what effect will this have on your future health?
- Are there any alternative treatments or types of surgery, to this type of surgery?
- What are the benefits of having this surgery?
- What are the risks or side effects of having this surgery?
- What can you do to manage these side effects?
- Will you need dialysis after the surgery?
- Will you need a blood transfusion during or after the surgery?
- What if you don't have this operation?

- Do you need a second opinion and if so, where can you get a second opinion?
- How soon should you have this surgery?
- What should you do if your health worsens while you are waiting for surgery?
- How long will you be in the hospital?
- When you get home will you be able to take care of yourself or will you need help?
- How long will it take you to recover from the surgery?
- How long before you can go back to work?
- How long before you can go back to your regular exercise program?
- How much experience does your doctor have doing this operation?
- Where will the operation be done?
- What type of follow-up will you need after surgery?
- How often should you have checkups and for how long?
- Are there any clinical trials that you should think about?

[Questions to ask before you have a kidney removed for kidney cancer](#)

#### **4. Questions to ask about your Radio Frequency Ablation (RFA) or Cryoablation procedure**

- What is Cryoablation? How is this procedure performed?
- What is RFA? How is this procedure performed?
- What kind of anaesthesia is required for this procedure?
- Why does your doctor think that this procedure is the best treatment for you?
- What are the benefits of this procedure?
- What are the risks or possible side effects of this procedure?
- What can you do to manage these side effects?
- Where will this procedure be done?
- Who will be performing the procedure?
- Will you need to stay in the hospital after this procedure?
- Should you have someone drive you to your treatments?
- When you get home will you be able to take care of yourself or will you need help?
- How will you be followed after this procedure?

## 5. Questions to ask about your treatment for metastatic kidney cancer

- What treatment choices do you have?
- What treatments does your doctor recommend and why does your doctor recommend it?
- How does the treatment work? Is the treatment “chemo”?
- What are the benefits of this treatment?
- What risks or side-effects are there to the treatments?
- What are the chances of recurrence of your cancer with these treatment plans?
- What should you do to be ready for treatment?
- How soon should you be treated?
- Can your kidney cancer just be observed instead of treated?
- What are the chances that this treatment will cure your kidney cancer?
- Are there any clinical trials that you should think about?
- Do you need a second opinion? If you want one, where can you get a second opinion?
- What is your long-term prognosis (outlook)?
- What is the likely course of this condition?
- What is the long-term outlook with and without treatment?
- What are your treatment options and where can you get access to them?
- Are there any effective and reasonable treatment options available outside of Canada?
- How effective is each treatment option?
- What are the benefits of each treatment option?
- What are the risks or side effects of each treatment option?
- What can you do to manage these side effects?
- What percentage of patients benefit from this treatment?
- Does your doctor expect your tumour to shrink or just stay the same without growing?
- Will there be tests during the treatment to determine your response?
- How long will it be before you see possible results from the treatment?
- Where will the treatment be given?
- Are there foods or medications that you should avoid while on treatment?
- What, if anything, should you have available at home for any possible side effects?
- Should you have someone drive you to your treatments?
- When you get home will you be able to take care of yourself or will you need help?
- If your symptoms worsen, what should you do?
- What symptoms or problems should you report to the doctor immediately?
- Who should you contact with any problems that you may encounter?
- Will your ability to conduct your daily activities be affected? If yes, for how long?
- Is there anything you should not do while on this treatment?
- Are there any clinical trials that you could benefit from?

## **6. Questions to ask about your radiation therapy**

- Why do you need this type of therapy?
- What are the benefits of this treatment?
- What are the risks and possible side effects of this treatment?
- What can you do to manage these side effects?
- When will the treatment begin?
- How many treatments will you need?
- How will you feel during the treatment?
- Where will the treatment be given?
- Should you have someone drive you to your treatments?
- When you get home will you be able to take care of yourself or will you need help?
- What follow-up will you need after the treatment?
- Who will do the follow-up?
- Are there any clinical trials that you should think about?

## **7. General questions to ask about your care**

- Which doctor will manage my care?
- If you are having pain, who will manage your pain medications?
- What other healthcare professionals will be involved in your care?
- What resources are available for you at your treatment centre?
- Is there an oncology social worker available for patient support and financial information?
- Where can you go to get more information about kidney cancer or about your treatment?

## **8. Questions to ask about your participation in a clinical trial**

- What is the main purpose of the study?
- Why do researchers think that this approach might be effective?
- Who is the sponsor of the study?
- How are the study results and the safety of participants being checked?
- How long will you be in the study?
- How long will it be before the results of the study are known?
- What are the possible benefits to you? What are the possible benefits to future patients with the same condition?
- What are the possible risks to you?
- What other options do you have?
- How do the benefits and risks of the trial compare to those of the other options?

- What kinds of therapies will you have during the trial?
- What kinds of tests and/or procedures will you have during the trial? Are any of these tests and/or procedures experimental?
- How do the tests in the study compare with those that you would normally have if you do not participate in the trial?
- Will you be able to take your regular medications while in the trial?
- Where will you go for your medical care?
- Who will be in charge of your medical care?
- How will your study participation affect your daily life?
- Can you talk to other people in the study?